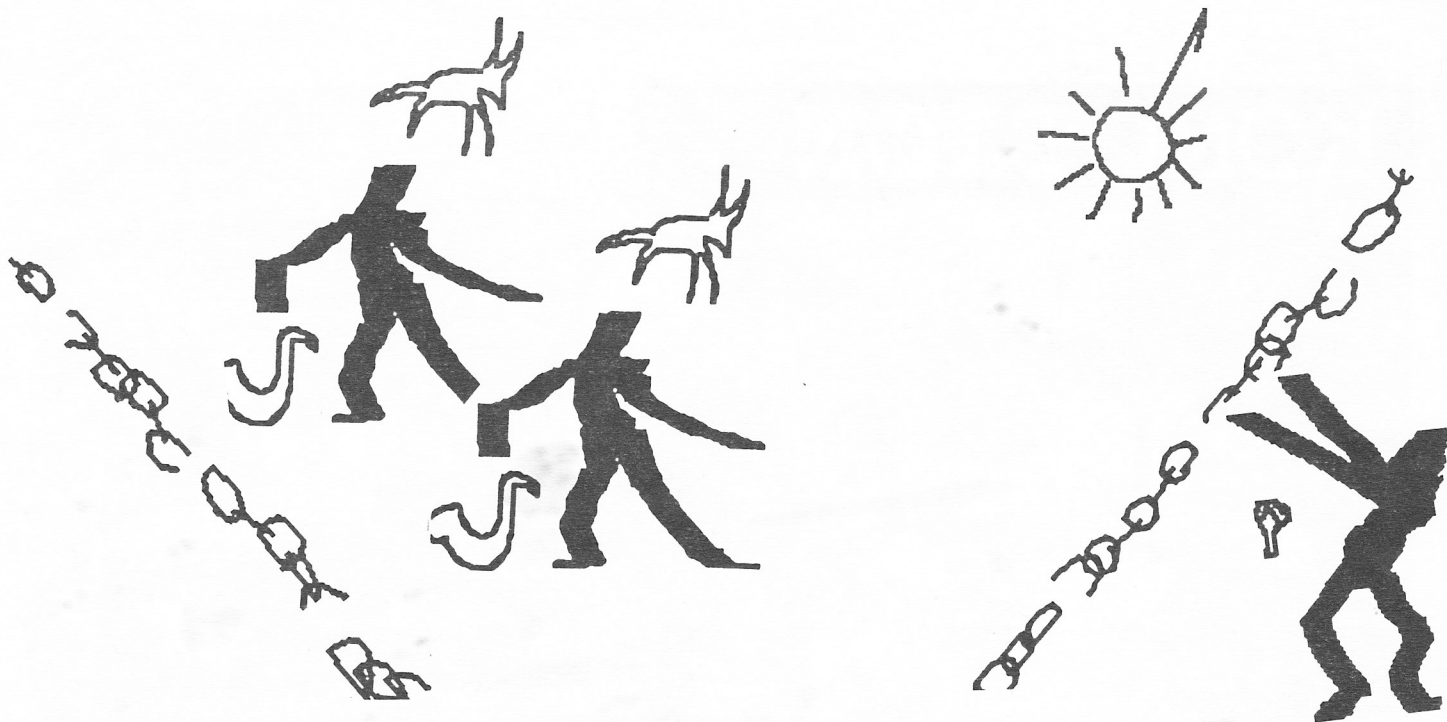


KOMOTION




International

#1



KOMOTION



BECAUSE WE CELEBRATE LIFE AND BATTLE
BECAUSE WE ARE NOT SATISFIED
BECAUSE IT IS UP TO US
BECAUSE WE LOVE TO SING AND DANCE
BECAUSE THE PRESSURE IS UPON US
BECAUSE THERE ARE GOVERNMENTS AND
BORDERS AND COPS AND COURTS
BECAUSE THE BOUNDARIES MUST BE BROKEN
BECAUSE WE ARE OUT OF CONTROL
BECAUSE THEY SAID WE COULDN'T DO IT
BECAUSE WE FEEL LIKE IT



Decade-dense?

if 6 was 9

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EDITING, PRODUCTION, DESIGN :

Margot Pepper, Robin Banks, Reptile Brain, Tara Marlowe, Annika Kahn,
Claude Palmer, Mary Liz Thomson, Tommy Kalil and Richard Olsen.

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Komotion International is a cooperative of artists. We welcome all submissions, letters,
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MARKING TIME

by Mat Callahan

The earth revolves around the sun. One trip, one year. Simple enough. So why do we call this 1988? Any half-wit knows the earth has been making its rounds a hell of a lot longer than that!

After the fall of the Bastille, July 14, 1789, that year was declared the first year of liberty. When the royalty was abolished in 1792, the names of the months were changed and in 1792 became the first year of the republic. The year 1!...

Religion and politics are the same thing. No divine right of kings, no divine right at all: Choices, self-interested decisions made by certain self interested groups; man-made, man-unmade. Mullahs and Ministers, Pontiffs and Presidents, Rabbis and regulatory commissions are all there to keep the people in line and the privileged in power. They claim to be empowered by a "higher authority," whether it be god or the popular will. And they all claim that the beginning of their rule was the beginning of *Time*! (Either literally, as in *Genesis*, or figuratively as in the *American Revolution*, wherein all events *preceding* the *Great Date* are of no importance and all that follow are glorious!) The fact is, the real date today is approximately 2.5 million since homo sapiens. But by drastically reducing human

After the dead '70s we were all promised "great things"...

history, rulers are able to greatly increase their own apparent significance. They can replace history with mythology, demeaning actual human achievement, and they can narrow the perspective of the "common" people, so that we can never see beyond *their* time, *their* version of human nature, *their* version of the past, present and future. Indeed, we can't see beyond religion and politics. (**Religion**: sex is dirty and you can only really live after you die! **Politics**: boring speeches and helplessness.)

Now we hear all this media blather about the 60's. A decade. Ten years. But, obviously, much more than the passage of time; it is an easily manipulated catch-phrase to convey a period in which earth-shaking events took place. It is the memory, the images of these events that the term is intended to evoke and control. But the 6th decade of the 20th century since the supposed birth of the supposed Messiah didn't even *contain* all the actions for which it is remembered any more than its "stage-name" tells us what it's sup-

posed to mean to us now. Hell, the youth rebellions, street fighting, Black liberation, anti-Vietnam stuff was *raging* in the early 70's - the so-called "me" decade. And it was in 1976, the middle of the same decade, that Johnny Rotten first sang "Anarchy in the UK!"

After the "dead" 70's we were all promised "great things," from apocalypse to liberation, in the big, bad 80's. Well, in case you hadn't noticed 1988 is half over! And, looked at in those media-hype terms, the 70's were positively explosive compared to *this* wet noodle era.

Marking time means cutting time up into little pieces and making people relate everything to their "own" youth, their own lifetime. It means now is never gonna look as exciting as some other time. It means you're never part of anything beyond your miserable little world, so of course, nothing you do means a damn thing. It means cutting off the greater part of human experience on this planet as if nothing happened if it wasn't written down! Marking time means waiting to die.

Shit! *Any time* is a great time to be alive. *All the time* is when you can do something. History isn't made by individuals and power-broking media hacks. It just rolls and you get with it or you get rolled over. Sit around waiting for the 60's to come back and you'll be dead before they are - of natural causes too!

Living means celebration and struggle, not submissive worship. It means becoming conscious of the vastness and diversity of humanity's evolution, not blindly following the distortions of those presently - and temporarily - in control. It means seeing one's life and work as part of a great process and not as one's private property to be compared as in a market, with someone else's "goods." It means exploring and discovering the infinite possibilities that exist in nature and fighting against the forces that prevent the vast majority of people from even looking at what those possibilities are.

With pseudo-research and sentimental reminiscences, self-interested parties are trying to make the 60's "safe" - for themselves. A period of world-wide assault on the status quo becomes an aberration or a curiosity to be viewed in smaller than life movies or to be discussed by pathetic pundits of public opinion on Donahue or Nightline.

But knowledge, wisdom, experience and truth refuse to be buried. Curiosity triumphs over fear. Discoveries made by our most distant ancestors, by the most "primitive" peoples, continue to assert themselves in the face of the onslaught of a technology gone mad. Science continues to pose new questions about the universe in which we live and to challenge the grip of prejudice and ignorance on our thinking. This is no time to be marking time. Now is the time to live.



SATURN EATING HIMSELF.

THAT WAS THEN THIS IS NOW

by Mary Liz Thomson

1968 can never repeat itself, but as the spiral of time lunges forward it is almost as if we are approaching it again. Now it stands beneath us, like a foundation. Surrounding it is the larger context of history, and the evolution of a planet on a dangerous road to self-destruction.

Both repression and the spirit of resistance marked the 60's. The incredibly destructive use of power and oppression was challenged in the streets, at the Pentagon, in the back of the bus, out in nature, in the bedroom, and in the outer limits of our minds. Different values were created, and the world was changed.

These social explosions were in part a reaction to the global decline of the industrial/imperialist age, and modern "rational" thought. What we call the 60's was not, however, the climax of this process. The dominant ideology of materialist progress still permeates the world's social structures. Much of the emerging alternative culture was eventually exploited, sucked into the commercial system, and churned out for consumers. The exploitation of world resources, the escalation of war machines and U.S. foreign intervention continued unhindered.

Many of the ideas launched in the 60's essentially failed to break with the very structures they were challenging. This is partly because of the inherent strengths of the dominant system and the tremendous degree of change that would be necessary to replace it. But it is also a result of the limitations of current strategies towards social change. At the core of this seems to be how people view the roles of power and participation within this process of change.

Power struggles in and between organizations are one of the most serious limitations facing "the left." Social change organizations have often adopted the same repressive hierarchical styles and narrow views as their antagonists. Creative participation is drained and new growth stifled. Often lost is a sense of the pluralism within a common goal.

The failure to create adequate alternatives for sincere participation, diversity of expression, direct action, and tolerance is symptomatic of the desire to control instead of to liberate people. Any legitimate conscious movement for change should be aimed at encouraging and tolerating diversity, not controlling it. If our goal is "to set the captives free," we should remember not to exclude ourselves.

Part of the problem with modern civilization in general is that the institutions and bureaucracies we've created can't keep in touch with the situations they are meant to deal with. The destructive and alienating effects of centralized hierarchical control are as much a problem for revolutionaries as right wing dictators. Whether behind dogma or the barrel of a gun, layers and layers of authority lie farther and farther away from life as humans experience it.

Our society is influenced at every level by modern notions of organization, control and rational thought. This mechanistic way of thinking is efficient up to a certain point, then it becomes destructive and an illusory form of control. It fails to account for the nonlinear links of expression and communication which operate together in the real world. It is this sort of disconnected thinking which allows scientists to test nuclear weapons underground while ignoring the

randomness and self-organization in nature represent most complex systems.

Imagine a million white ping-pong balls mixed at random with a million black ones, bouncing around chaotically in a tank with a glass window on it. Most of the time it appears as a gray mass. Then suddenly the window flashes all white, then all black, changing colors at fixed intervals. By all traditional rules the white balls and the black balls shouldn't suddenly organize themselves, but they do. Scientists looking at molecules in certain chemical reactions and biological systems are finding that such a self-organization does occur, despite the theories of classical physics and probability.

These scientists have also discovered awesome patterns of communication and harmony embedded in what first appears to be chaos. Through intricate processes involving feedback, different patterns gain influence and become amplified. What emerges is a picture of participatory or self-organization, rather than of centralized control. Further, as implied by the ping-pong ball experiment, the element of "individual choice" appears to be necessary for the system to operate in complex synchronization.

fact that power and radiation escape their control: the effects on earthquake faultlines and the earth in general need not be acknowledged.

It is crucial to understand how this sort of "rationalization" has impacted the world. What our civilization has accepted as the road to progress is also the path towards our own grave. On a humanistic, ecological and social level it is impossible for the world to sustain this continuous level of self-destruction. There are no umbrellas for acid rain, holes in the ozone, or nuclear fallout. There is no final way to silence the agonizing cries of tortured dissent, no weapon to extinguish the spirit of life that must continue to sing and rage.

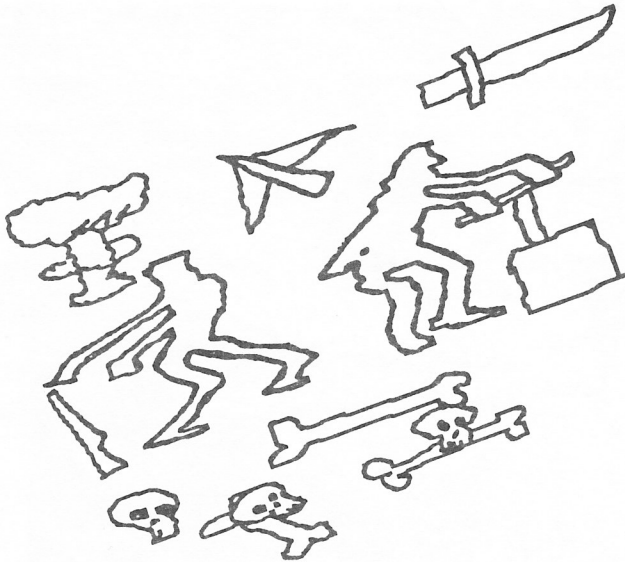
This spirit of life is multidimensional and infinitely diverse. It is not a machine. No one perspective or predetermined system can encompass it. The kind of transformation necessary to prevent nuclear destruction has to come from the conscious participation of humans on a massive level. One vanguard cannot achieve this by the leadership of their faction alone. In fact it is essential that this unifying consciousness come from the widest and most diverse range of free expression.

The way in which humans actually live, grow and organize themselves differs greatly from the classical model of a machine. Even within the scientific realm, the bastion of rational thought, renegade scientists are challenging this dominant model. These scientists are in the process of developing theories of "chaos" which are increasingly gaining recognition. They are exploring the workings of natural systems which are organized in a decentralized way. They believe the mechanistic or closed-system approach to interpreting the world can at best describe only a small fraction of reality. Contrary to what might be expected, they are finding that open processes associated with *

**"We are stardust, we are golden,
we are million-year-old carbon"**
-- Joni Mitchell

"We are DEVO"
-- DEVO

**"We are what we are, and that's
the way it's going to be"**
-- Bob Marley



German scientists Ilya Prigogine, nobel prize winner, and Isabelle Stengers are two of the original developers of chaos theory. They wrote the groundbreaking book Order Out of Chaos, an outright challenge to classical science. "Our vision of nature is undergoing a radical change toward the multiple, the temporal, and the complex. For a long time a mechanistic world view dominated science. In this view the world appeared as a vast automaton. We now understand that we live in a pluralistic world."

The machine model that developed the industrialized world stems from Newtonian ideas. In this paradigm all systems operate in equilibrium and are subject to universal laws that any outside observer might discover. These are the same sort of views which shape modern institutions, including our belief that the media can provide us with an objective view of reality. Prigogine and Stengers point out that this foundation has been shaking precariously since its formation.

Most of the major recent developments in physics, thermodynamics, relativity and quantum mechanics emerged from the discovery of the limitations of Newtonian physics but failed to break with the Newtonian paradigm. While quantum mechanics helped put an end to the hope of discovering a single conceptual description of reality, it never really dealt with the questions of time and determinism.

What quantum mechanics proves are the dualities and complementary aspects of nature. Seeing wavelengths as both wave and particle is one of the clearest examples of this. A wavelength has a linear path of time which is easy to follow, either backwards or forwards. In this sense it is reversible and deterministic, or without random choice.

But the interlocking spirals of energy that weave history can't be understood, explained, or contained in these realms of linear time. This is why Prigogine and Stengers are interested in open and non-linear systems. You can't follow the life of such systems backwards like a wavelength. At too many

points the system could have gone in a million different directions. Why it took one course and not another may be pure chance, or the collective choices of "active matter."

What this means about the nature of change and complex growth is that we need uncontrolled diversity and dis-equilibrium. Different sectors that cooperate with, rather than coerce each other can have a wider impact together. Prigione and Stegners describe how healthy change emerges from systems far from equilibrium: "At times a single fluctuation or a combination of them may become so powerful as a result of positive feedback that it shatters pre-existing organization. At this revolutionary moment it is inherently impossible to determine in advance which direction change will take. It can either disintegrate into chaos, or leap to a new differentiated higher level of order."

Prigogine and Stengers understand the complementary aspects of both random and deterministic processes. However, for the majority of natural systems the future has a relation to the initial conditions of change, but it is not contained in them. In this sense 1988 could never be totally predetermined by the events of 1968, and the future is still ours to create. "Whatever we call reality, it is revealed to us through the active construction in which we participate."

In nature and society, there are both individual choices and collective processes. Contrary to some new age or "me" generation thinking, we do not have total control over our own reality, but we do participate in it. We also share responsibility for it. What we need is to find ways to communicate and work together which also respect the individual experience. For me this doesn't translate into some airy-fairy idea of peace, love and tolerance towards everyone. Machismo, torture, war, and repression are totally out of control in Central America, Africa, and all over the world. I would like to find a way to stop the killers who are responsible.

So what is it going to take to end the cycle of terror and destruction in the world? One thing for sure, it's not going to happen by a bunch of sectarian leftist groups fighting with each other to be the leaders of the "movement." Achieving trust, cooperation, and diversity of expression among people who want change can seem overwhelmingly impossible. Yet it may be necessary for our actual survival.

The world is in what I would call a serious state of dis-equilibrium and crisis. The structures relied on for progress are crumbling. Look at the stock market, international debts, wars for oil, food, land and housing. Communist countries are losing some of their power as well. Their moves to decentralize aren't happening because they suddenly decided capitalism is great, but because they recognize something more complex and dynamic taking place which is beyond their control.

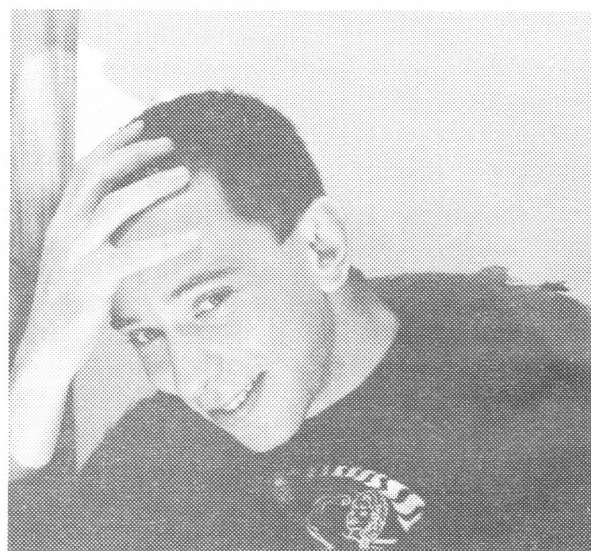
If we are to instigate change, and live and act according to our values, we have to find people we trust and create our own alternatives. The possibility of impacting larger society will depend on how well we do this. The challenge must come from our hearts and our minds, with a willingness to take risks, and to act without seeing exactly what's ahead. There is no predetermined structure for which to strive, no "right" answer beyond a respect for the awesome diversity of the spirit of life. In the words of the Clash, "We don't need no gang boss, we need to equalize."

Something's strange; it's summer in San Francisco and it's *hot*. But otherwise, things have been typical—the U.S. shot down an Iranian passenger plane, killing 292 people, and then blamed Iran; we managed to endure another Presidential primary, and although Jesse Jackson tried to get the outcasts, downcasts and generally alienated public to have faith in the system one more time (and vote for him), the primaries were still boring; and Meese just resigned—claiming victory and vindication...

Down at "Bradley Enterprises" we've been trying to shake, rattle and roll the best we can. Looking over the last few months of Komotion schedules, there have been some killer shows, great films, unexpected happenings, three excellent art exhibits, and several successful benefits. Many of the bands that performed over the last couple months are included in the upcoming Komotion compilation record, which should really be an eye-opener to many. It features **Ogie Yocha**, **Sister Double Happiness**, **Looters**, **Po Go Bo** (formerly known as **Snake Stretchers**), **Penelope Houston**, **Snake Walk**, **Yeastie Girlz**, the **Beatnigs**, **World Entertainment War**, and spoken word performances by **Peter Plate**, **Don Bajema**, and **Alejandro Murguía** (who earned a rave graffito in the bathroom after a recent reading—"Alejandro doesn't read, he *reads*!"). Here's the haps...

Our gallery was off to another fine start in March when Komotion had the privilege of debuting the first show in this country of work by **Tim Wicks**. Wicks' tremendous acrylic canvases never failed to illicit some sort of response, and whether positive or negative, respect seemed always implicit. Imagine a work titled "Judicial Postures:" the three visages of judgement, the monsters at the top of any given power structure, or for that matter, the monsters we may have dwelling at times within ourselves. Sickly green and red veins pulse in their foreheads and decrepit white hands. Their reptilian eyes are full of condemnation, betraying a self-hatred which has sought its revenge upon the world. The one on the right is worked into a rage, his mouth vaulted open pronouncing the verdict, his face, contorted, his veins about to burst. The one in the center is silent, vulture-like, his index finger poised on his temple. His eyes are squinted ever so slightly, yet behind these stony lids, a pair of defiant, immovable eyes bulges with all the hate and self-righteousness of a Satan. His mouth is still but for a subtle smile which seems to linger in wait like the recoiled venomous tongue of a snake. And the one on the left: hollow and vacant as Reagan, Bush or Kissinger...These are our celebrated aristocracy, our keepers and heroes: putrid through and through.

Yet Tim (being the sensitive, good-natured young man that he is,) is also capable of capturing the spirit of hope, as in "Ascension." A masked woman, her body the epitome of African grace, power, beauty, and determination, fights her slow, arduous way up towards a muted and ambiguous light. (It is this painting that has been reproduced on the cover of our Komotion Magazine Compilation, which includes a full color insert of Judicial Postures. ...By the way—plug,plug—the Compilation is a fund-raiser for this magazine and includes issues one through six, as well as art by Celeste Connor and Winston Smith. It is available



Tim Wicks

in a limited edition of 100 for \$7.50 or so.)

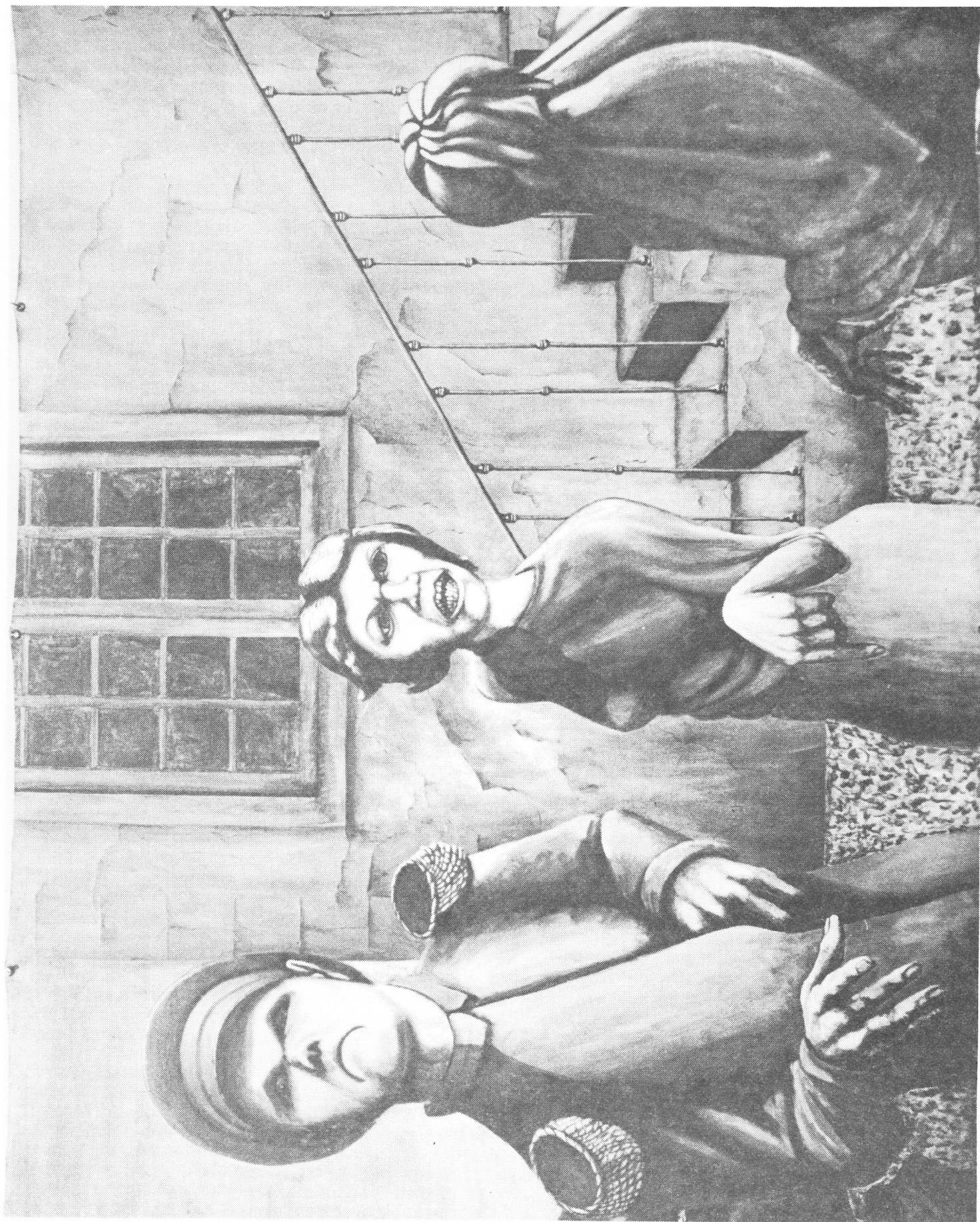
Wicks grew up in working class London, a butcher by trade, and by necessity. At a young age he became very involved in social issues and has never desisted in his political activities. Complementing these activities, his paintings are a refreshing and uncompromised form of social commentary, and are consequently as difficult to digest as Sue Coe's controversial art.

Along side Sue Coe, Wicks' influences include Leon Golub, Max Beckman, Otto Dix, and Francisco Goya. His work reflects elements of various historical art movements such as Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, Realism, and traditional, yet the result is something entirely his own—something passionate and powerful, vividly alive and colorful, yet garishly dark...

Tim Wicks has the potential to be one of the greatest artists to emerge from the Bay Area. His art speaks for itself.

Currently Tim attends San Francisco State University, where his professors have fortunately failed in their attempts to discourage his painting.

The Komotion Pictures series continues to amaze, entertain and defame. Back on February 6, Komotion Pictures ran a black and white Godard classic, "Alphaville," a weird pseudo-sci-fi detective film. **World Entertainment War** updated the theme with their barrage against media manipulation. With televisions stacked six feet high, the band lambasted South African politics in "K-mart Tribal Ballet," and lead singer **Rob Breszny** mimicked TV evangelists as he sought audience confessionals. Besides the performance's theatricality, the band itself is excellent, moving smoothly between rhythmicworld beat grooves and rock with cathartic moments. **Hobo** followed (comprised of the core of the famous East Bay band, **The Uptones**) delivering passionate songs, both personal and political. **Eric Dinwiddie**, guitarist and co-lead vocalist, is always a riveting presence on stage. This was their debut gig, and I'm sure we'll see more of Hobo playing around the Bay Area. Also on this night, DJ **Uhuru Maggot** threw down hard and



Painting by Tim Wicks

funky, propelling rhythm into the booties of those who forgot they had one. We hope he'll be back for future shows, but in the meantime, catch his radio show on KALX Sunday afternoons—it may be the most happenin' thang on college radio in the Bay Area.

One of my Komotion Pictures faves was the Buñuel night (on March 5), where I saw two young MDC fans walk into the middle of "L'age D'or" grumbling about "art" movies and then become totally enthralled when they saw a man in a suit spontaneously kicking a "cute" little poodle, and another man with a hunting rifle growing irritated with a little boy for playing and, yes, shooting him as surrounding party-goers attempted a look of concern—that Buñuel, what a punk! Buñuel's attacks on the bourgeoisie are hilariously ruthless, his insights about human nature, striking. In a later scene, two long-separated lovers reunite in a garden and proceed to devour each other with passion. At one heated moment, (and don't forget this film was made in the 20's!) the young man freezes in action to focus on the marble foot of a Greek statue in his line of vision. The intensity with which he contemplates the obscure object commands the woman's respect, who in turn takes a pious look at the statue's foot. The two then continue to tear away at each other. When the man is called away, the woman rises, looks at the foot of the statue, and as if turned on by her lover's previous mental orgy, proceeds to give the toes of the statue a slow and sensual blow job.

"Simon of the Desert" followed and lead nicely into the music of the **Bedlam Rovers** and **MDC** (Millions of Dead Cops or Multi-Death Corporation or Millions of Dead Christians or Millions of Dead Chickens or...) The Rovers played a tuneful, energetic set and are truly becoming a great band. Then MDC took over—in lingerie. Trying to outpunk the punks, they played a set of blues and funk-influenced songs with an entourage of followers on stage to add to the atmosphere. It was sweaty and outrageous and the lead singer ended up taking it all off, baby. A very wild and fun night aided by **Veronica's** funky mixes between and after the bands.

On April 2, Komotion Pictures presented a John Heartfield documentary and Craig Baldwin's "The Wild Gunman." The Heartfield film explored this artist's effective use of photomontage against Nazi oppression in pre-war Germany. His printing techniques were fascinating and the interviews enlightening. **Iowa Tank** provided entirely unique guitar-based rock music, followed by **3-D Jesus**, who were last seen levitating above the All-Star Hotel.

The Komotion Jazz Cafe on February 10 brought Jazz to people who had no background beyond television sound tracks. This scribe caught videos about the **Cotton Club** and **Thelonious Monk**. (Check out Monk!) **Michael Koch** read poetry and **Kevin San Francisco** chanted words of Jazzdom. **B.J. Papa Express** swung mightily into two sets of great jazz standards commanding nothing short of admiration and profound enjoyment. Vinyl tracks and wine to send us home.

Toward the end of February, at a Klub Komotion party, the all-female, electric marimba band, **The Present**, made their SF debut. Creating beau-

tiful, constantly changing music on glowing marimba/samplers, and singing harmonized melodies, they presented us with a speculative glimpse into the future of music. We're sure to hear more about this band, for not only were they indeed *present*, but *gifted* too—har, har. On the same bill was **Joyo**, creating original textures and sounds, and the spoken word performance of **Richard Laranger**, whose poetry is full of amusing insights.

Speaking of amusing insights, the comedy/improv troupe, **Crash and Burn** tore it up again at our Reality Commentary Show, March 9. Improv is difficult to pull off, and these guys (and girls) do it really well. They have a regular gig every Wednesday at the Rose and Thistle in SF. Check 'em out! Another comedy group, **The Outpatients**, also contributed to the insanity of the evening.

A Klub Komotion Party on the 19th of March featured **Frightwig**: a truly frightening set of anger and charm. **Weenie Roast**: the biting and cutting edge of womens' rock?—they had some fun. Or how about: just a female version of Shiva with many legs and broken strings and fun! **The Yeastie Girlz**: git yer hands offa my body....no don't!—Their brave and dirty rap got down hard—unaccompanied save for many rounds of well-deserved applause and laughter. Bright and witty, yeah, but mostly good, dirty fun. **Susan Duffy** was the poet of this event and if applause can be used to gage quality, people seem as eager to watch writers perform as they are musicians. **KYLE Z.** introduced the crowd to her tales of domestic terror and sexual trial.

Our monthly poetry series on March 30 included **Louis Cuneo** reading "From The Perspective Of You As The Porno Clerk" and **Adam Cornford**, who read from his recently published book of poetry, **Animations** (City Lights Press.) Cornford was as fluid as ever. His compelling words stirred up a myriad of images, ideas and emotions. Refreshing indeed to listen to one of the few writers around who are still acquainted with the possibilities of the English Language. Cornford is Director of Poetics at the New College and an editor of *Processed World Magazine*.

Our Poetry Series on April 27 included **John Curl**, author of **Tidal News and Decade: The 1990's**, and **Alejandro Murguía**. Alejandro's reading of his latest poem, "**Codex** —for my generation," immobilized the audience for the entire length of the half-hour work. (The piece could have been longer, but this reviewer lost track of all notion of time and place.) To begin to describe this beautiful, haunting poem would be as fruitless as attempting to chain down a howling wind.... Let's just say that upon hearing it, one is given access to the true spirit of a culture which has evaded and mystified almost all those who were not born of Latin American soil or blood. (Incidentally, Buñuel was one of the exceptions.) Murguía traces the history, hopes, dreams, the struggle, tragedy and triumphs of La Raza, to say the least. One is granted insights into the motivations of a people who are too easily stereotyped and dismissed. Yet whether Alejandro speaks for La Raza or for all those of "his generation," one

NEWZ N' REVIEWS, to page 18

"I'm down" — The Beatles
"I'm not down" — The Clash

PREWORDS

i heard she was getting married. she told me so herself. i wondered, did she and her man meet in the detox clinic on a mutual plunge into the nether world? or did they become acquainted with each other in a neighborhood bar? i never found out.

my lack of knowledge was appropriate. those days were nearly incomprehensible to me. the atmosphere was acrid, charged by the tension of a public waiting for war. what war, you ask? take your pick, i say.

please, look at your face in the mirror, in the last ritualized moments before sleep. right there, i believe you can experience a vigorous conflict. and slumber itself is a consonant for war, strung out on an orbit of dreams from soweto to new york.

but i understood this much. she was getting married after a strenuous drinking bout. an exercise in the consumption of alcoholic beverages which could have proven fatal. and the aftermath was contained in a secret password. repeat after me marriage before death.

this year, death must be a tired orifice, unable to lubricate from exhaustion.

and life? while death can count upon millions of recruits, life emits a low flame, alone or in the company of a few others. and for purposes of identification the living have constructed a venue to rail against death: the bedroom.

underneath a mountain of blankets and sheets the line is being drawn. decisions are hammered out of sweat. lovers becalmed and celibates in heat prepare for a war that is already here, poised in ambush under their pillows.

sometimes, my friends want to abandon their lives. but rationally, without pain. like her. the final good-bye would be studied, a casual flourish of the voice that trails and disappears. she is gone.

and i cannot think of the strangers who share the same road. they are creeping towards limbo, right outside the door of this abandoned building where i write these words. their daily calculations, the mathematics of passion and fear amaze me.

i don't believe she can hear me. but i will ask her anyway. do you remember the beginning of the last chapter, the night when we shot out the windows of our favorite bank? the air was warm and coated with the odor of fireworks. it was the fourth of july.

peter plate

The Children Who Said They'd Never Forget

by Margot Pepper

There exists a place which cannot be charted within the invisible scars of latitude and longitude. No map can contain it, any more than might it contain a group of individuals who were drawn to a particular pocket in any given city simply because it seemed the thing to do at the time and because they felt good there together, for although the streets they walked may be plotted and traced, tomorrow the spirit which bound this community may exist there no more.

When we were children this place was each of us moving through the entire world like thoughts stirring within a body. The entire world, that is, except for the part which had to do with *them*, the ones who were here before us. The ones who in spite of taking up most of the territory in the world chose to remain in just a teensy weensy part of it. And just what exactly did they do there? Mostly nothing—except a lot of sitting around and a hell of a lot of talking, which amounts to about the same thing. That's right, they just sat around like the dumb parakeet the kid down the street had which kept on sitting in its cage waddling back and forth through its own excrement even when you'd opened the door for it to fly around.

And although they expected us to be perfectly happy sitting around with them in *their* tiny dull and oppressive world after supper, even when it was only going to be light outside for another hour and there wasn't so much as a stale cookie to look forward to, they hardly ever visited our world and when they finally did you had to beg first, really holler and carry on to get them to listen.

As if it were for our benefit. As if it were for our sanity that we went to such great lengths to describe it all for them, to show them all the things they were missing out on.

Now let's set things straight. It was for *their* benefit that we tried to show them the world was really a nice place... at least it could be if it wasn't for them screwing things up all the time... it surely didn't have to be as bad as they made it out to be at times.

It was for *their* benefit that we tried to tell them for instance that the wars which they all said they hated just did not have to exist at all. Nobody wanted them, right? Not a single person likes war, right? So what was the problem?

But they were ignorant. They would nod their heads "yes" but really they hadn't heard a word. They were stubborn and ignorant and arrogant in their ignorance and what's worse they kept on insisting that one day we would be just like them.

① We looked around at each other and each rustling of the grass and the laughter of our friends outside waiting for us. ② It would come at no time in particular but always at the appointed time and we would answer without hesitation, missing dinner if we had to, ditching class if we had to, skipping our job if we had to. We would respond with no less urgency than *they* to their alarm clock ringing out its summons to work or to the battle field or wherever it was that they spent their lives each day, because we knew once we were there, back in the womb of our original home, we would be immortal again, limitless, for we would be looked out for by the thing which wanted us alive in the first place and of which we were a part...everything would be all right again.

But as we grew taller and taller along with the height restrictions of the buildings to become at last, though never quite, the faces painted on the billboards, the call began to grow as weak as the song of birds in the city. It's not that the song wasn't there. It's just that it became difficult to distinguish it from the sounds of the traffic and sirens, and shouting and moaning. It even became difficult to distinguish it from things silent. Like street signs and unwritten signs and signs in general. Signs covering everything, usually making everything ugly because behind each sign is at least one rule and soon the rules close in on us because we forget just exactly what the rules are so we stop doing everything just in case we should break one. Especially the one that says you shouldn't ever, ever have to be alone, idle, quiet with yourself, listening.



See, the problem has something to do with fear and rules which are born of the fear and our fear of breaking the rules for fear of something which might be worse than the thing we were afraid of in the first place—whatever that was—and so now we know why grown-ups don't talk to people you and I can't see nor roll sideways down a fine hill of grass whenever the opportunity arises.

Where have the clouds gone that we used to ride upside down, for that matter the sky?

We have become like *them*. Have we broken our promise? We begin asking stupid questions. Ask a child what the meaning of life is and she will look at you as if you are a moron.

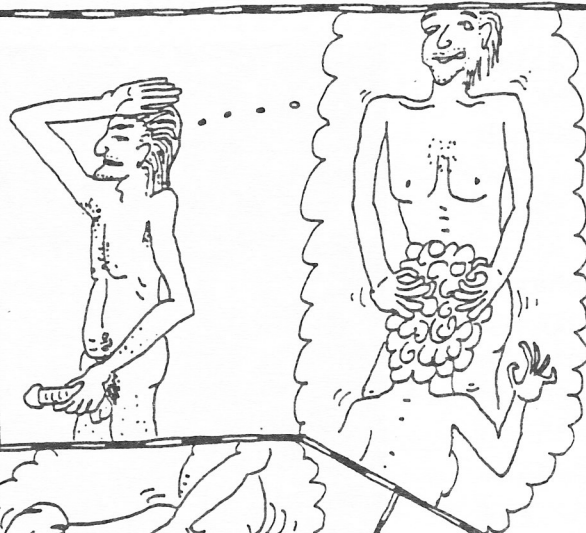
Fortunately we manage to find our way back there, to that place, every now and then. It can happen just like that, out of the blue when you find yourself on foot in the early morning with nothing more pressing than the desire to drink in the sweeter impressions of life, as if by savoring each detail you are preserving a delicious scene in a film no one but you will ever see.

It can happen when you're with a group of people; something in the way someone's eyes soften with unspoken clarity as they look at you, or when you're engaged in a duet of laughter. You'll happen upon it in something someone said, something read, a certain variation in a chord of music, or after the last light is turned off, when you are lying quietly in bed, still, alone and perfectly comfortable with yourself again, feeling your breath as if it were home.

Actually it is always there, somewhere. You see my friends, the thing, the life's work, the long-lost friend, true love, lost home, the buried nation; the god, the dead father, the formula derived by the study of bird migration, whatever you want to call it by, has always been very close by; as close as the distance between two people, two trees in Central Park, two ideas, one's feet and the ground, one's mind and one's body even. In fact, if you're paying attention, you'll realize you can never leave it.

So what happened?

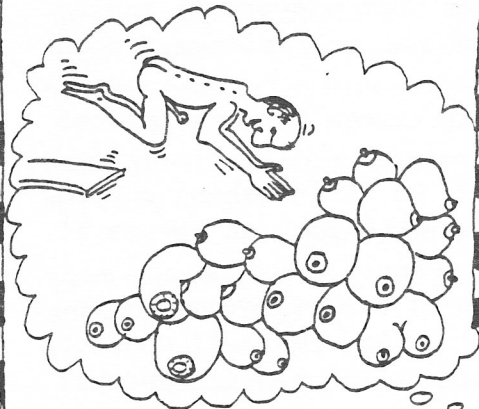
Theoretical
Science
by
T. S. Pushkin
".... a bird
in the hand.."
Bush



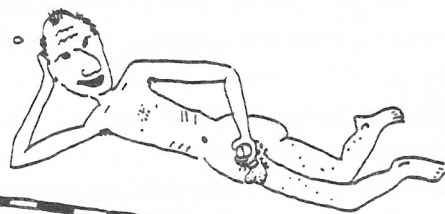
AH... AH... YOU
MAY EXPECT SOME
NEW PAPAL BULL.



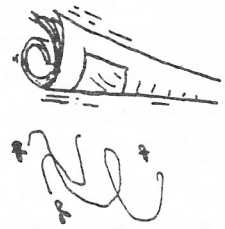
CARDINAL DOYDOIT,
IN THE FACE OF THE
NEW AIDS SCOURGE
AND THE SURGEON
GENERAL'S STATE-
MENT ON MASTER-
BATION, DO YOU
FEEL THAT THE VAT
ICAN WILL NOW
EASE ITS MORAL
STAND AGAINST
AUTO-EROTISM?



ALSO, WE HAVE REC-
OMENDED LEGIS-
LATION REQUIRING
ALL MALE INFANTS
BE TATOOED WITH
CONSUMER PROTEC-
TION LABELS.

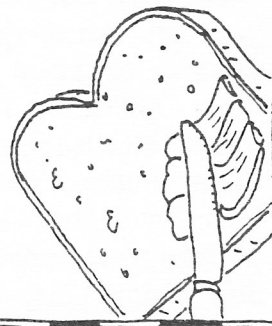


WE HAVE JUST NOW
COMPLETED THIS
PAMPHLET FOR DIS-
TRIBUTION EXTOLL-
ING THE VIRTUES
OF SELF-GRATIFICA-
TION.



HEY!
AT LEAST MINE
HAS A FACE!

DR. KOOP, WHAT
ARE YOU DOING
TO STEM THE
SPREAD OF AIDS?





A 26357744 F

Revolutionary War

ONE DOLLAR

"WHEN I HEAR THE WORD 'CULTURE' I REACH FOR MY REVOLVER"

—Nazi soldier killed in WWII

By Robin Banks

There is a local band called World Entertainment War that performs a ritualized burning of dollar bills during one of their songs. Obviously, the desecration of those few dollars is being used as a symbol, the rejection of the most valued item in our society and its very foundation. This is an artistic statement with a value far beyond \$4 in U.S. currency, because everyone has a reaction to seeing money burn... But after the performance some friends were complaining—"Why burn money when people are homeless and starving?" This sounded like a valid point, but something bothered me. Wouldn't the logical implication of that argument be the elimination of art and culture? Why spend *any* money or resources on art, when it could go to feeding people?

Reducing "valid" political action to a strictly material level denies the role art has played historically. The realm of art and symbol is able to challenge the status quo by raising fundamental questions about the *quality* of life in a society, apart from simply objectifying social conditions as isolated issues to be remedied *or pacified*.

The entire 20th century has been rife with art movements that have both attacked the reigning ideology and have been attacked and banned. Prior to the Nazi's taking state power, Bertold Brecht's agitational plays caused massive rioting and unrest. John Heartfield's photomontage and the Dadaist Movement aggressively attacked Nazi ideas. Years later in the U.S., Lenny Bruce was continuously arrested for mocking 1950's mores and cold war conservatism. The 60's saw the rise and worldwide domination of rock and roll and countercultural values. In the 1970's, punk exploded in England, striking out at the "no future" of a declining welfare state. More recently, the separatist Afrikaner regime in South Africa banned Pink Floyd's song "The Wall", while in the United States, the PMRC is out to censor rock music lyrics using the pretense of "pornography" to suppress alternative viewpoints. These are only a few examples of the political effects and reactions art has inspired. (It's curious that the most reactionary segments of society often consider art a lot more powerful than the "left" does.)

While most traditional "activists" are concerned with eeking out a few more crumbs for one cause or another, through art and the propagation of ideas we are able to conceive of possibilities which surpass the choices offered by mainstream politics. And what is more dangerous to the system—wanting *more* of what *they* have or rejecting what they have created as corrupt at its root?

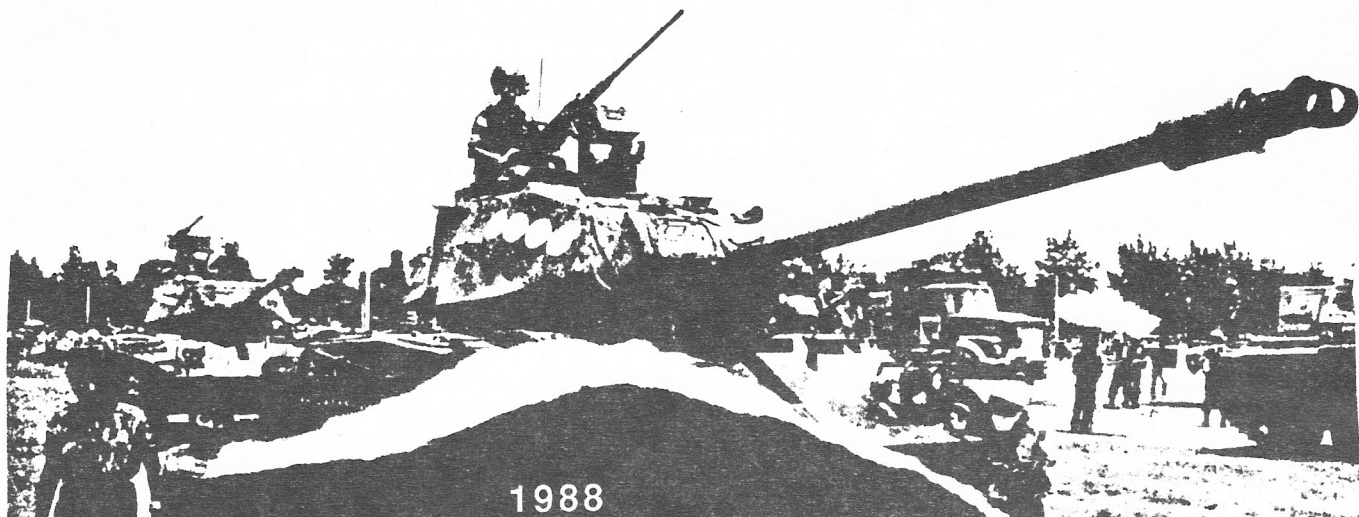
In Zurich, in the mid-1980's, there was rioting over the need for a youth center. The windows of exclusive department stores were smashed. Furs and jewelry were not stolen, but thrown into the street and trampled on! This "statement" was terrifying to the authorities not only because of the violence, but because of the contempt it revealed. This may not have been art, but it demonstrates the power of symbol in rejecting the material basis of our society.

In addition to the political sphere, without culture, art and human expression, (whether joyous or despairing,) what would life be? This is no bourgeois bullshit. In the most destitute situations and the most impoverished societies, where people own nothing—they do have *one* thing—culture. It's an identity, an inspiration and it can't be suppressed. Man, there's a reason people sing the blues. And why do people, in a place as repressed as South Africa, make some of the most harmonious, ebullient music in the world? This is hard for a lot of western "politicos" to figure out.

In fact, the kind of thinking that is wholly concerned with material reforms reveals an underlying contempt for the "masses;" as if people are only capable of responding to pure self interest and can be bought off. The people who hold this view are less interested in seeing fundamental changes in the quality of people's lives than installing themselves in power. (Recently an agitator for some socialist candidate told me that if elected they would raise the minimum wage to \$7.50! This outraged me. Sure I work a shit job, but to be bought off by a couple more dollars was disgusting. Let's be better fed dogs, is that what you have to offer?)

But what has driven people throughout history to liberate themselves, to commit acts of rebellion, to challenge the status quo? Why would people from all over the world go to fight for the Republic in the Spanish Civil War, putting their own lives at risk?—or die defending the Paris Commune, which only lasted 90 days but blew a hole in what people thought was possible in this world!?

Everyone needs to eat and have shelter and live in a safe, healthy environment. The majority of people on this planet don't have these simple things, but the spirit that inspires and drives forth humanity is one thing they do have. This human experience finds its expression and salvation in art and in culture and we should never underestimate this.



1988

by AK

In 1988 I saw two cops beat up and cart away a latino man on my block in San Francisco and there wasn't a word of it in the papers.

That same year our country invaded Honduras calling it "nation-building." For two straight weeks what was left of the American National Pride occupied the front page of the *Chronicle*, the *Times*, the *Examiner*, *Channel 7* and all the other insignificant stations that provide us with verbal propaganda, sparse facts, and headaches. A week or two later we invaded Panama; our government wasn't really sure if it liked or disliked Noriega - simply couldn't make up its mind. Rumor had it that the invasion came after a boisterous night of coin tossing. Rumor had it that Noriega tossed the final coin - a fifty cent piece I think.

Following closely behind came somewhat of a declaration of war on Iran; an oil-platform-sinking-party, to say the least. The papers turned to bigger and better things at this point like, "who's who in the world of child rearing;" "Human adaptation - from sea life to cement life," and numerous articles on asbestos fibers finding safe settings in the nostrils of shipyard workers and newly-built youth hostels...

...So let's talk about attitude. Better yet, let's talk about the attitude of the late 1980's. Further, let's discuss bloody 1988 shall we? I mean, really, here we have three invasions into foreign countries all in a matter of two months! What did we do about it? I don't know about everyone else but I think there was need for a serious attitude change. Tell me, what kind of attitude did it take to read about an invasion, attend a protest, "get your fair share of arrest," and return home refusing to question the lingering existence of Operation Success.

What kind of attitude was it that woke up in the morning full of desire until it confronted the comics and instantly shattered?

What kind of attitude was it that enabled Congress to back Reagan's decision to attack the Persian Gulf just because he "informed" them previously. Was this attitude at all similar to that manner of people who let headlines guide their nature of protest?

What kind of attitude was it that voted for Jackson in hopes of keeping Bush out? What kind of attitude/disposition/manner was it that believed and still believes that the U.S. is a free country, relatively speaking of course?

The attitude of the 1980's. Downright reactionary if you ask me.

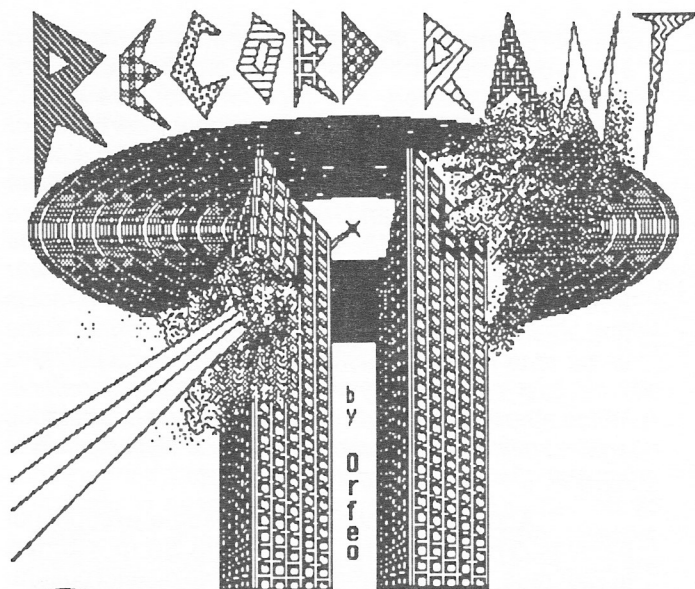
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**S. troops
Honduras**



invisible war



Someone told me that this was supposed to be a "sixties" issue, then the editors went and changed their minds because everyone was so bored with the topic that nobody wanted to write about it. As a result, I'm the only one at the party in a Nehru jacket.

Speaking of boredom, how about all those bands who are so bereft of creativity that they can only churn out second-best imitations of various sixties sounds? It's one thing to acknowledge the past and another to relive it as farce.

In a recent interview, singer/songwriter/wierdo Robin Hitchcock said the following: "The '60's were the pop era... the great innovators of the '60's destroyed it. Every movement contains the seeds of its own destruction. Dylan was responsible for bringing intelligence to pop music and also destroying pop. Hendrix taught a new language on the guitar, which everybody else abused... Syd Barret mixed pop and mythology and triggered off Judas Priest and Black Sabbath and all that crap. At least I've never influenced anybody, so I haven't done any damage."

All the artists Hitchcock cites were responding to their world as they perceived it at the time. You can recreate the sound, but you can't recreate the meaning. "Sixties wanna-bes" are doomed to chase their tails. You can't go home again, folks. Let's make music that speaks to the present.

Of course, there are many subspecies of "sixties wanna-bes," especially here in sixties-bound San Francisco. At this point, I was going to include a "matching columns" quiz—you know, Chris Isaak=Roy Orbison, Sea Hags=Led Zeppelin—but that would have been petty of me. Instead, I'm going to pick on a bunch of out-of-town bands who don't know my address. Actually, what follows are reviews of recent releases by bands who represent the three principal trends in sixties regurgitation—Stones Clones, Byrds-of-a-Feather, and Psychedelic Flashback.

The Del Fuegos, Stand Up
Slash Records, P.O. Box 48888
L.A. CA 90048

The Del Fuegos wear their record collection on their sleeve. You can hear Creedence, you can hear

Exile on Main Street, and you can hear Tom Petty (literally, even—he makes a quest appearance) but try as might, you can't hear the Del Fuegos.

These guys are talented enough but any original voice they may have seems drowned by some misguided pursuit of "rootsiness." Producer Mitchell Frooms literal-minded adherence to a late '60's/early '70's sonic palette (the first sound you hear on Stand Up is an electric piano) is as affected as lead vocalist Dan Zanes' snarl.

Some musicians (Nonfiction, Los Lobos, and Elvis Costello) can digest their influences and spit out new insights. Others just regurgitate and re-swallow the cud.

The Royal Court of China, **The Royal Court of China - A&M**

Q. How can you tell a "guitar band?"

A. It's the one with the boring guitar player.

The Nashville-based Royal court of China swallow the Byrds hook, line and sinker. They're not any worse than the rest of the fourth-generation Byrd clones, but it's their misfortune to be on a major label and my turntable at the same time. I love the Byrds as much as the next guy, but isn't the pre-digested formula of jingle-jangle sus4 chords and winsome vocal harmonies getting just a little bit old? Royal Court have even got a bass player who doubles on mandolin just like Chris Hillman and a drummer who keeps time almost as badly as Mike Clarke—his bootheels do some wandering indeed. (Even the dumbos at Columbia knew well enough not to let the Byrds actually play much on their debut album.) In places, Royal Court tries for a tougher rock sound, but their true plumage shows—it sounds like an imitation of Tom Petty imitating the Byrds. Isn't it time to put the Byrds to bed?

The Flaming Lips,
Oh My Gawd!!!...The Flaming Lips
Restless Records, 1750 E. Holly Ave.,
P.O. Box 2428
El Segundo, Ca 90245-1528

The Flaming Lips are a neo-hippie guitar trio from Norman, Oklahoma. They've got a batch of songs with hallucinogenically-inspired titles like "The Ceiling is Bendin'" and "One Million Billionth of a Millisecond on a Sunday Morning." (Was that "Oh my gawd!!!" or "Oh, brother?") But you know, the Flaming Lips aren't as bad as they sound. For one thing, they play and sing pretty well and can cop a fairly strong groove. Some of the jams go on for a while, but it's like Wagner or reggae—it sounds better when you're not in a hurry. Lyrically, they walk a fine line between the stupid and the mock-stupid. There's lots of couplets like "Exploding butterflies hit and run/Evel Knievel jumped the gun," but they're balanced by some wry observations about la vie en drugs: "Man, I'm not no drug addict, but a person's got to have something to keep from going insane." In other words, psychedelia can get creepy, but not quite as creepy as real life. The album's final minutes literally deconstruct the Sgt. Pepper mythos. The last song ends with a sustained piano chord, just like you-know-what, but it's followed by the sounds of a piano being smashed to bits while a tape loop of John Lennon drones "Turn off your mind, relax...turn off your mind, relax..."

cannot help but feel that where Alejandro speaks, a thousand of us speak, and that is why it is so important that this poet's voice continues to fall on willing ears. With him seems to rest the hope of not only his generation, but an entire culture.

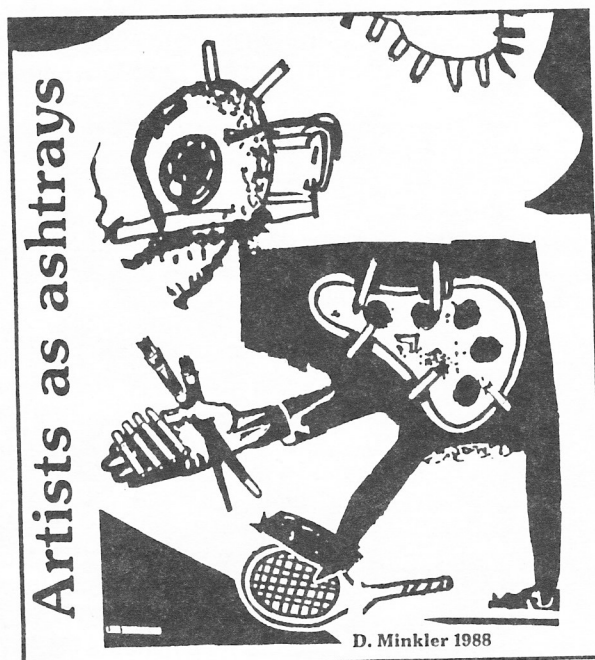
Murguía taught Latin American Literature at San Francisco State in the early 70's. He is the author of Farewell to the Coast and an editor of Volcán, an anthology of poetry from Central America (City Lights Press.) Most recently he is publishing a collection of stories about the war against Somoza entitled, Southern Front. Look for "Codex" in the next issue of Komotion, to be printed in its entirety.

On this same night there was a new show by **Doug Minkler**, the prolific Bay Area garage artist. Doug's work embodies a notion that seems to have been forgotten by many of those I call "cuisineartists;" mainly that the artist, in all likelihood, can be considered the conscience of society (or at least one of,) and so being, has a responsibility to speak out. (*Cuisineartists*, by the way, believe that anything they slap onto a canvas, a page, or throw into the sound waves is brilliant—never mind that they themselves do not understand it...that is for the critics and biographers to figure out—because the machine in their heads does all the work for them.) Minkler's work is not only humorous at times and aesthetically pleasing, but like much folk art, it is functional and necessary. More importantly, it is accessible to all. His own words express his philosophy best and perhaps (hopefully?) some of our own:

"...soon we, (politically conscious artists,) become frustrated and disappointed. Our work has become contrived and cliched; or worse its purpose is completely

incomprehensible...For (some), both (art transformed into propaganda or created for organizations) are forms of prostitution, and therefore not true artistic statements. These assumptions ignore centuries of commissioned and political art. This ignorance of art history benefits the status quo. By keeping artists unaware of their rich and revolutionary history they are unlikely to veer from the establishment's focus on the individual. Our culture praises the individual yet power is invested in the organization. The resulting effect is that artists produce isolated and irrelevant work. At the same time the progressive movement becomes less articulate and culturally weak. There is also popular illusion among artists today that creativity in itself stands against militarism, injustice and greed. But creativity is neutral; the uses of creativity are not."

April at Komotion hosted some exceptional benefits. The benefit for **La Victoria Soup Kitchen** in Santiago, Chile brought together two distinct cultural groups. There were several Latino families (some with children), who were fans of **Kamanchaka**, a sextet of Andean folk music, and then there were a lot of young **Sister Double Happiness** fans with multicolored hair and spikes. It might have been because the room got so crowded, or the beer took effect or maybe it was the good "vibes," but everyone seemed to recognize one another as a friend after a while. Kamanchaka played their beautiful, traditional music on flutes, stringed instruments, and added harmonious vocals. There was a short slide show on the soup kitchen and then Sister Double Happiness took the stage. SDH's lead singer, **Gary Floyd**, is one of the most passionate singers in any band in the Bay Area, and the SDH



This poster is the first in a series of art works aimed at ending the leading cause of preventable death - the tobacco industry. Comments and artist's participation welcomed. Please write DOC, (Doctors Ought To Care), P.U. Project, PO Box 31604, Houston, Texas, 77231-1604.

Like a magician, we don't miss a trick. Through our growing patronage of sports and culture, the public's perception of us is changing.

For instance, we realized we could improve our image and increase smoking among women and girls by attaching our Virginia Slims brand name to professional tennis. In the same way, we've increased the sales of cigarettes among blacks by sponsoring institutions like the Studio Museum of Harlem and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Emphysema and bronchitis? *Shazam!* Now we're the Whitney Museum of Art and the Joffrey Ballet. Lung cancer and heart disease? *Presto!* Now we're Marlboro Country Music and National Public Radio.

Heck, we're not a tobacco company, we're a Patron of the Arts. That's why we at Philip Morris say, **"It takes art to make complacency great."**

Philip Morris Companies Inc.

Makers of Marlboro, Virginia Slims, Benson & Hedges, 100's, Merit, Parliament Lights, Miller Beer, Löwenbräu, Jell-O, Post Cereals, Sanka, and other General Foods products. A DOC ad fake.



rhythm section kicked ass as usual, powered by **Lynn's** drumming. (As this goes to press—or Xerox—whatever the case will be, Sister Double Happiness has already broken up. They will be sorely missed, as they contributed so much to the local scene and various causes. Their music has meant much to people.) The Canadian band, **NoMeansNo**, followed, hitting the stage with an aural attack in a post "Gang of Four" style, only faster, tighter, and more aggressive. An excellent band on all levels. They shouldn't be missed next time they tour SF. (By the way, the benefit raised about \$900 for the Soup Kitchen!)

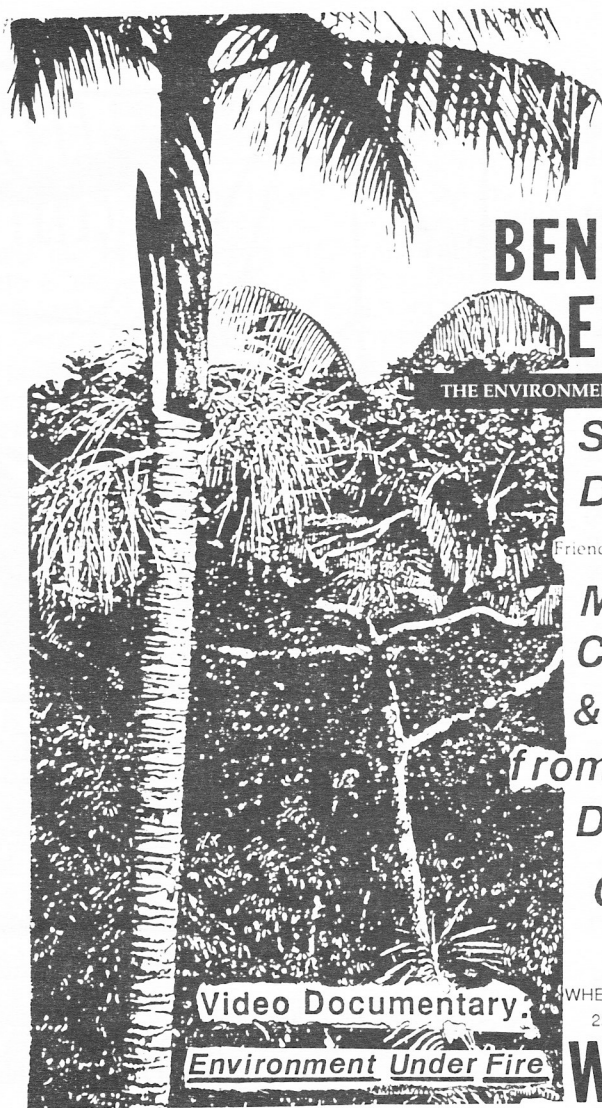
On April 13, we held a benefit Cafe Night for the **No More Censorship Defense Fund**. Even though **Jello Biafra** was acquitted in his recent trial on pornography charges, the Defense Fund is continuing in order to raise public awareness about attempts to censor the arts and freedom of expression. People packed into the room to see a new 90 minute documentary on Biafra's case and alternately laughed, hooted, and booed during excerpts from the trial and statements from the prosecution. The PMRC and their cohorts may have picked the wrong person to attack in this case, as charismatic Jello Biafra's responses are consistently witty, intelligent, and make a mockery of their position. **Rob Breszny**, lead singer of **World Entertainment War**, opened the show with a spoken word performance, illuminating examples of double-speak and media manipulation in a rapid-fire series of images and phrases. Check out his recently published book, Images are Dangerous.

Two other benefits of note were for the **10th Street Homeless Collective** in Berkeley, and for tax protester, **Joseph Brinkman** and his daughter **Sarah**, both of whom the IRS brought near the edge of homelessness. The 10th Street Collective has fought several recent battles over squatting rights on abandoned buildings in Berkeley. In one case, the University of California bulldozed one of its buildings within twenty-four hours of the squatters' eviction by the sheriff. The benefit was made possible by several bands, including **Penelope Houston**, **X-Tal**, and **Beef Church**.

The benefit for Joseph Brinkman and his daughter Sarah included information from the **War Tax Resisters**, who refuse to pay taxes since so much of the money goes directly into the Defense Department and its intervention policies. A lien was placed on Brinkman's wages for back taxes and he and his daughter found it difficult to both survive and keep their home. The benefit helped him out a bit and raised awareness about how one's tax dollars go to spreading terror around the world. Joseph's band at the time, the **Zendiks**, performed along with **Ogie Yocha** and **Vivisection**. A night full of talent and energy.

"Kill the Trees" was the name of our May 18th benefit for **Epoca**—that's Environmental Policy on Central America. **David Brower**, a well-known environmental activist, spoke on the relationship of environmental destruction to war and greed. After some positive reflections on Nicaraguan reforestation programs, the film "Environment Under Fire" was shown, a good historical perspective of the ultimate environmental destruction: war against the poor in Central America. **Maria** and **Claudia** from **Trio Altamira**





BENEFIT FOR EPOCA

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT ON CENTRAL AMERICA

Speaker:

DAVID BROWER

Founder
Friends of the Earth, and Earth Island Institute •

Music:

Claudia Gomez

& Maria Marquez

from TRIO ALTAMIRA

Dance: Some of

CONTRABAND

\$6.00 Donation

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE, MINORS WELCOME
22 FILLMORE LINE TO 16TH AND FOLSOM

Video Documentary:

Environment Under Fire

WED. MAY 18

2779 SIXTEENTH ST SAN FRANCISCO

8:00 PM

KOMOTION

"If I had a hammer" --
Traditional
"If I had a rocket launcher" --
Bruce Cockburn

we say unto you that a wine bottle did not play those solos! (For those present who can't believe all that raw energy could possibly unleash itself twice, be on the lookout for Po Go Bo's EP, to be released in September on **nu-tone Records**.)

From May 25 through the end of June, we had a show by painter **Richard Olsen** entitled "Signs, Sites, Thorns of Self." Olsen meticulously designed the show to fit and enhance the gallery space at Komotion. Many of the pieces are separate paintings juxtaposed to each other in a collage effect. The largely black and white works created an overall presence which forced the viewer to examine his own reaction to the stark, silent and staring paintings.

As if inventing a hieroglyphic language for some future race, the forms Richard uses are simple, such as eyes, commas, birds and skulls. The images are stirring (even disturbing), yet one has to ask oneself why, since Olsen avoids the linear and the obvious. There is no didactic quality to his paintings, but there is the experiential. The paintings reach down into that truly human essence that can recognize feelings (especially suffering) in the eye of another whom we may not even know. Creating a heightened sense of empathy seems to me to be of crucial importance if human beings are to survive into the next century

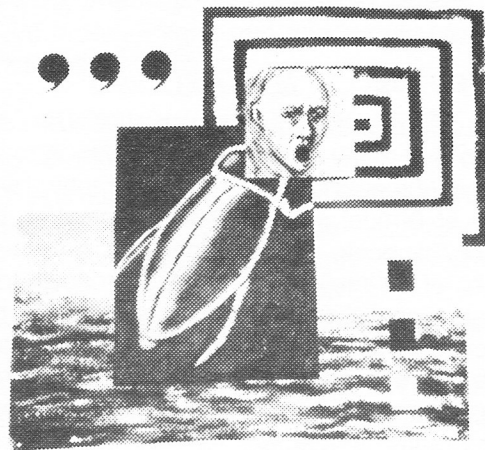
and beyond.

Richard Olsen lives in the Mission District of San Francisco. He resumed painting three years ago after ten years of full time political work. He presently works at a school for so-called emotionally disturbed children, where he says he "identifies more with the children than the behaviorist-oriented staff." Comments from the public (and some of the children) about Olsen's show follow, along with some of his artwork.

We're running out of space, but wanted to mention some other performers who made Komotion the eclectic place that it is. Many thanks to **Jack and Adelle Foley**, **Crag Hill**, **Ivan Arguelles**, singer **Will Sand Young**, and cymbalon player, **Michael Masley** for performing on the Poetry and Performance Series. (Unfortunately a clash of schedules put the Looters record release party on the same night and many of us couldn't make it.)

And last, but definitely not least, thanks to all the DJs who spin those funky, loud, jazzy, and out-of-this-world beats - **VERONICA LIVE**, **JONATHAN E.**, **KAYUMANGUI**, **UHURU MAGGOT**, **AMAZING GRACE**, and **CUP O' SMELL CREW!**

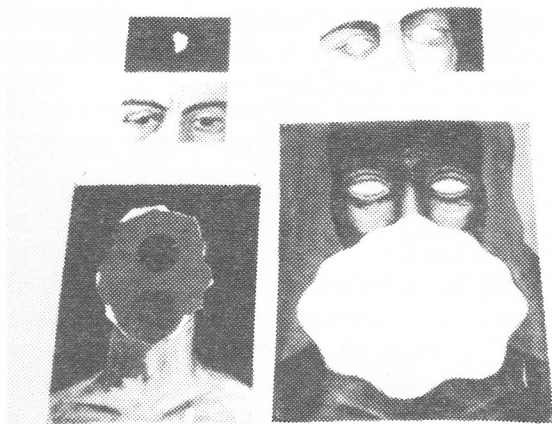
Sentences, grammatical tension, shows in the
pen, brush, halo of language - You expect
what I no! Is there life after Robert
-M.D.



As in a dream
a screen no one hears,
silent history of
pain. Messages from
subconscious skip over
cognitive. Relate to
past memories, experience,
suffocation of expression.
Anonymous panic eyes -
human eyes - sentient.
We all feel and know
these eyes.

Pretty Sea of Unrest line (awesome) NICK LAX
Abstract ART (See it's Savage)
(Stud Art) (Stud Art)

Screaming to get



I'm going to explain this as if I'm
the painting. The painting of the man
with white in front of his face -
I am a confused man, my thoughts
are crowding me. Help! What's going on!
Wait, I'm relaxed, it's all turning to
good now.

Thank Richard you are
a great artist and friend.

Love
Hina

But it's its own UPSURGE - And I don't
do feel the urgency & the SURGING BREAKING
& Flowing going on. You've released the contradictory
intensity & there's some serious clarity conveyed.
Including the roses in the eyes & the COMMAS & THE RAGING FACES
TO QUOTE A SONG I KNOW, "RAGE ON" - LF



BOOK REVIEWS

by Mat Callahan

LUIS BUÑUEL: MY LAST SIGH

Surrealism, the Spanish Civil War, postwar Mexico and many famous artists all come to humorous, multi-faceted life in this autobiography. I was only aware of Buñuel as a surrealist filmmaker, prior to reading this book, and imagined him, oh so wrongly, as a bit of an intellectual "artiste." In down-to-earth, conversational style he blows away numerous popular misconceptions of the period in Europe prior to WWII, Spain before, during and after the Civil War; surrealism in particular and the art scene in general. He describes the surrealist movement as "revolutionary, poetic, moral" and tells many hilarious tales that demonstrate its deep involvement in the events of the day. His relations with Dali, Picasso, communists, anarchists and Hollywood are revealing and quite timely. Most of all, Buñuel's spirit: iconoclastic, challenging and totally rebellious, indeed breathes through and beyond his last sigh.

EMMA GOLDMAN: LIVING MY LIFE

I approached reading this book with some misgivings. First of all, I almost felt obligated to read it because in the context of debate raging throughout the world over the future of our species this was a voice that I had never really listened to, even as it refused to be silenced. Of course, anarchism had become somewhat fashionable by way of the punk movement but its history and its vision remained a mystery to me. In fact, it just seemed to me to be another "ism" which, along with Marxism and nationalism, had inspired many, many people and brought about change but was ultimately as doctrinaire and boring as the very ideologies it sought to replace. I figured it was, at best, a symbol resurrected by the youth of England conveying an attitude toward the existing social order that put them outside the clutches of various "political" groups. At worst it was an echo of 19th century European revolutions, which had impact in the U.S. in the early 20th but had crashed and burned in the destruction of Republican Spain. Emma Goldman was a small footnote in history and because I travel in wacky social circles I have to read her life story!

As soon as I started reading it, however, I could feel, throbbing in those pages, a vitality, a charge, that insisted I read and think and question everything and, you know what?—Emma Goldman knew how to live! I was swept along by her passion, by her sensuality, by the excitement and drama with which she battled against falsehood and for her ideals. Red Emma was no stodgy theoretician nor was she a blind-faith crusader. Her compassion towards her foes is matched only by her withering self-criticism; her willingness and ability to reveal her private struggles with doubt, despair and longing are incredibly rare among "leaders" of any kind. (The autobiography of Malcolm X is the only other I recall impressing me in this regard.)

A picture of immigrant communities in the U.S. and the effect of their culture and ideas on the American landscape emerges as Goldman learns to speak English by giving speeches and writing leaflets in the course of a multitude of campaigns. Her experiences as a woman in "the movement," her stand on sex, love, marriage, homosexuality—all born out in her own life, not only in some textbook—are remarkably contemporary and compelling. Accounts of the assassination of President McKinley, the persecution of anarchists and the hysteria surrounding U.S. entry into WWI, including the clash among revolutionaries over opposing the "rich-man's war" vs. allying with one's "own country" tumble from the book in a tale no novelist could have invented.

Encounters with Lenin, John Reed, Makhno and post-revolution Soviet Russia are illuminating and haunting, what with glasnost and perestroika happening today. It was positively gut-wrenching to read of the ostracism and hatred with which the views and person of this life-long fighter were greeted when she finally managed to get out of Russia leaving behind doomed comrades and dashed hopes. How she dealt with this and the book she left for us to read are, in some ways, the finest testament to her ideals; a truly modern woman, with truly modern attitudes of vital relevance. She dares all who claim the mantle of the struggle for human liberation to answer the questions she raises and to evaluate the very purpose of their involvement in that struggle.

STERLING SEAGRAVE: THE SOONG DYNASTY

This book describes the events in China from around the turn of the century up through the revolution and near to the present. The story of the Soong family is not just a symbolic representation through which one can view these events—the Soong family dominated them.

Warlords, opium trade, foreign invasion, betrayed revolution all rumble on over the corpses of famine and disease-stricken peasants. Vultures pick at the rotting flesh of a once great culture. Political and military strategists from Roosevelt to the Comintern dash onto the playing field to attempt to control the destiny of the most populous of countries. Characters like Pock-marked Huang and Big-eared Tu wield enormous power through opium trafficking, at one time literally running the whole god-forsaken place!

This is fascinating reading and a complement to Lu Hsun's stories. It is particularly relevant in light of two movies making their way onto the big screen recently: *The Last Emperor* and *Empire of the Sun*. These films barely mention the main forces, the most important elements in the situations in which their respective stories take place. That doesn't necessarily make them bad cinema, but for anyone whose curiosity was aroused by them *The Soong Dynasty* should be helpful.

LU HSUN: SELECTED STORIES OF LU HSUN

"How can a man like myself, after four thousand years of man-eating history—even though I knew nothing about it at first—ever hope to face real men?"

"Perhaps there are still children who have not eaten men? Save the children..." April 1918.

Thus concludes "A Madman's Diary," the first of the stories in this book, written, says Lu Hsun, "to encourage those fighters who are galloping on in loneliness, so that they do not lose heart." These are the creations of breathtaking beauty and bone-chilling torment; the kind of writing that produces a physical reaction (at least, it did in me.)

Little known in the rest of the world, Lu Hsun was declared the chief commander of China's cultural revolution by none other than Mao (the cultural revolution in general, not the specific one of 60's vintage—Lu Hsun died in 1936.) His influence in China was, and I imagine, still is enormous. He is credited with being the first short story writer in the history of modern Chinese literature.

He was an intellectual, he studied in Japan, and he used his pen to fight both the feudal system as well as the foreign powers subjugating China. He was always in hiding, hounded by the gangsters running China, ultimately dying of tuberculosis. The communists claim he was one of them, others dispute that, saying he was a "perennial outsider" but regardless, what emerges from his work is a unique voice, one that speaks in universal, timeless words.

Even though some knowledge of Chinese history and events of the first 30 years of the 20th century are necessary to get all the symbolism, there is, in these stories, an unmistakable tone, a resonance born of alienation, anger, frustration and the hope that lives in faint rays just over the horizon. U.S.A. 1988 may bear little resem-

blance to China 1930. But Lu Hsun's art is living proof that wherever, whenever people seek to awaken their fellows and arouse hearts and minds they cross all boundaries of time and place.

RICHARD RHODES: THE MAKING OF THE ATOMIC BOMB

This is not an old, obscure or hard to find book. In fact it came out in '87, has been promoted throughout the "book world" and even, I think, made the best-seller list. So why am I wasting Komotion's pages with a mention of it? Because I'm afraid that you guys out there will miss it if I don't, that's why!

Rhodes is a liberal scholar and in fact offers apologetic defense of those involved with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in particular, and the U.S. government in general. He presents interesting evidence, worth reading, but his conclusions, on that score, can be shot down by a couple of simple questions. However the body of the book describes in great detail and vivid prose the process through which science and politics arrived at the splitting of the atom. The roles of Einstein, Oppenheimer, Bohr and Teller, along with many others are revealed. And their views on how the discovery will affect our future, are, to say the least, of great urgency. (The ignorance of some of the heads of state mentioned is astonishing!)

Unleashing the power contained in the atom is a remarkable achievement. What it is and how it was done, however, remain secrets hidden in the clouded atmosphere of academia and, indeed, are mystified even by people who claim to want to change the world! It is difficult but possible to comprehend this "feat," and I suggest that if the scientists who accomplished it are even *possibly* right in saying it demarks a crossroads in human history, then everyone should find out what the hell it's all about!

⊗ **1956 CHEVROLET** ⊗

1956 Chevrolet. It was the one car your dog never got carsick in. It was your Dad's second car. He gave it to your older sister. Then she went away. And you ended up driving it. The Chevrolet with the tinted windshield. You washed the car, but only once a month, and drove it to school the last year of high school in 1961. That car was fine property in the farm country. It cruised along, slow and low. Windows open. The smell of late summer hay made the air rich, and strangely dark. The generator never worked. So you just kept two extra batteries in the trunk, and traded batteries back and forth -- stopping at the garage near the bridge by the river. Your girlfriend was the preacher's daughter. But he was a Unitarian -- so she could take her blouse off. But that was all. In the Chevrolet. And that was enough. You were happy. Especially when you parked the car by yourself on Cheyenne Bluffs, overlooking the plains, with the windows down and a rainstorm barreling towards you, high wind, lightning in the distance, lightning nearby. And all Kansas was suddenly only a part of your territory.

⊗ --by Tony Vaughan ⊗

'I know what I want but I
 just don't know (how to go
 'bout gettin' it)' --
 Jimi Hendrix
 'Don't know what I want but
 I know how to get it' --
 Sex Pistols

THE ART OF PROPAGANDA

by Pat Aranao and Tim Wicks

Recently, the San Francisco Art Institute exhibited work by painter Sue Coe in its McBean gallery. Some people have come to know Sue Coe's work through the printed page, as her bread and butter work appears in the *New York Times* Opinion/Editorial pages, *The Village Voice*, and *Mother Jones*. She puts forth her work in the pages of twenty-five cent newspapers so that we can see the relentless attacks she makes on the social and economic problems coming from within the structure of Western society; those affecting us all. Her books, How To Commit Suicide in South Africa, Malcom X, and her latest, Police State, which is a catalogue of the show at the Institute, all offer her uncompromising work with hard line facts about the events she is addressing. The books are usually collaborative with writing by Holly Metz or her articulate younger sister Mandy Coe. The message in her work is the work and Sue Coe makes no bones about it.

The show at the Art Institute was a comprehensive one. There were prints, drawings and paintings from throughout the 80's. Sue's subject matter is consistent; she exposes the exploitation of capitalist society and addresses the oppression it maintains in order to achieve its wealth and sustain the power held by the small ruling class. She refers to her work as propagandistic because it propagates ideas, whereas "high art says nothing." And certainly hers generates a response which is charged and intended to move people toward taking control of their own lives, rather than allowing themselves to be controlled by others.

*As capitalist society rapidly declines...
 Coe's work becomes imperative.*

Initially, Coe's work strikes out violently. Rape, torture, beatings, and murder are shoved in the viewer's face with an expressionist twist of the human figure; a Goya-influenced sense of drama and a post-modernist sense of decay. She portrays what capitalist society has created: a world filled with violence and injustice; a place in which "To think and act as a human being in a system set up for profit, is to be a classified as a criminal" and "To protest innocence is to be subversive;" a place in which "The total of the world arms expenditure for one week is enough to provide every human being in the world with enough clean water, food, shelter, health care and education for one week;" a place in which poverty is considered a psychological problem and, in the UK, (where Coe is from,) one woman is raped every three minutes.

Critics of Coe complain that her work is too consistently violent, but her response is that she only depicts what she sees in the world around her. Her own self-criticism is that "My paintings fail because they show only people defeated." But in that expression of defeat she attempts to incite her audience to rebellion; to fight to attain a decent, dignified existence for the majority who live as victims of the ruling class. Although both the attackers and the defeated are depicted as being equally wretched, it is the attackers who are the intended target of Coe's unfashionably class-conscious art; something most people find hard to digest in an age where the post-modern mind sifts social decay through a filter of apathy and cynicism.

Although it was once very important for the art world to create revolution in art, this does not seem to be the case any more. To find anything new in art is difficult, "everything's been done" seems to murmur from the unmotivated lips of many artists. But Coe is clearly more interested in revolutions that reach far beyond the invention of a new stroke, a different shaped canvas or reducing a picture to a flat white plane that is devoid of any statement or content. She wants to shove the expressions of the suffering in the faces of those who do not care and her distorted interpretations of those who create the suffering in the faces of those who might care but do not know who to blame.

As capitalist society rapidly declines in the twentieth century, Coe's work becomes imperative. In the United States we live a relatively insular existence and it is Coe's crusade to bring the suffering closer to the viewer. She seeks to present it in a different form that perhaps does not allow us to disassociate ourselves so easily from what is actually happening. We can detach ourselves from what we see on the evening news or in the newspaper but Coe attempts to add to the information in the media with the hope of pulling a few more people into the reality of the persecution and suffering she depicts.

Sue Coe's work can be found in the above mentioned publications, some of which are hard to find but not impossible. A selection of her paintings can be seen at Paule Anglim gallery on Geary Blvd, (one of the more daring galleries in the Bay Area.) Seeing her work is important and it certainly provides relief for those who are weary from the overabundance of trendy, empty or escapist art that seems to populate our "cultured" city. If you do see Coe's work, remember that doing so is not an end in itself but part of a broader struggle that reaches beyond the environment depicted in the paintings to a brighter setting where people control their own lives.



"Bothatcher," by Sue Coe

MOVIE REVIEW SECTION

—Our roving cinema columnist Claude Palmer

"THE BURGLAR"

Directed by Valeri Ogorodnikov (USSR 1987)

The burglar in this film is a young boy in modern times. Set in Moscow, the film cleared away plenty of misconceptions that I had about the Soviet Union—not by using propaganda, but by showing the relationship between the boy's school, his family and the interaction of the state and the world of youth music.

The boy lives with his father and his brother, Proshka, a Soviet "punk" musician. The father has become lonely and is criticized now by the older brother for bringing home women. The father is angered by the musician's life style, but the younger boy idolizes his brother and goes to hear him sing, along with the crowds of fans for whom he is some kind of prophet. The younger boy is much kinder to the father, understanding his need for affection. We see this contrast of conservative and "new" values constantly. With the new openness between countries, similarities in our lives become clearer. The wild young man holds his share of reactionary views.

Proshka, the singer, is both a hero and a loser. I identified with his fanatic commitment to his music—he is always unemployed, working on his music or makeup or writing rebellious symbolist lyrics! As part of a teen punk scene, he of course gets into all kinds of trouble; with the state, his family and fellow musicians. The concerts, although not recorded too well, show a great energy with lyrics like:

"YOU CAN READ THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO CAN FLY IN THE CLOUDS."

Proshka sings of the need for freedom from the accepted repression in a screamed language that inspires the youth who hear him. When he gets too poetic, a kid screams, "Fuck the poetry! Sing about the truth and the lies!" Perhaps the other side of life is too difficult for him. He is terrified of his girlfriend, and rude to her even as she helps him financially and prepares him for his shows. When she is violently thrown about in a party "dance," it is the young boy who consoles her.

A revealing sub-plot of the film shows the musical auditions before the State-funded music council. Musical judges listen to the songs of hundreds of young musicians who offer their Western-influenced folk songs for prizes and sponsorship. Usually lacking in both social critique and patriotic praise of the Homeland, the singers endlessly cue up, sing and leave with bored responses from the board. Russian Beatle "wanna-bees!"

The younger boy is in the school orchestra. Because he rushes his trombone parts, the teacher warns him that his idolization of his brother will keep him from playing "Swan Lake" correctly. This is serious business in Soviet music school!

The scenes of street life are exciting. The crowds gather and move like every other city. The punks hang together at their special places, smoking and partying both inside and outside. The older people pass by unapprovingly but are too involved in their personal dramas to become very irritated. Perhaps this is a Russian quality?

At one point, the police detain two mohawked and "punkily-attired" youths for questioning. They are not charged with anything because they are not breaking laws, only questioned:

"Where did you get your style?"

"I made it up. I got it from myself."

"Who told you to dress like this?"

"No one. It's just me. It's how I look."



"What does your boss say? Where do you work?"

"I'm a stagehand. I get my work done. No one complains; we dress as we please."

The authorities aren't satisfied, but they let the kids go. The kids refuse to credit the West as their inspiration.

The concerts are low-tech, but what is lacking in sound equipment is made up in passion. Heavily made-up singers and musicians occasionally draw police heat by singing "subversive" lyrics. This happens in one scene, but before any action can be taken Proshka is singing poetry again... "FOR THE LIVING IT'S BUT A STOP ON THE WAY, BUT FOR THE DEAD IT'S A HOME."

Proshka gets in trouble by selling a synthesizer left to him for safekeeping by a self-exiled black-market punker, called "How Much." When "How Much" wants either a synthesizer or cash returned in payment, he prevails upon Proshka to steal it from the Collective Music Center. The young boy tussles with his brother in the abandoned streetcar yards of Moscow, trying to stop him from doing the deed. Finally the boy steals the keyboard himself, thus protecting his brother. He then immediately confesses to the police. The father is blamed, in spite of being an exemplary citizen. He is not angry, but hurt and shocked within his vodka bubble.

The film concludes with the boy sitting, dwarfed by huge buildings. In a final image, a young woman folksinger sings of the beauty of the Soviet people and Homeland, pleasing the judges.

Without the use of propaganda, this film shows both the beauty and the problems of Soviet culture. Neighbors condemn a lonely man who seeks female company. A young boy is the only voice of concern for the older people who surrounded him. The State rewards those who sentimentally glorify it, and grudgingly permits a certain quota of dissent and free expression. A singer of conscience and deep poetic talent is consigned to the fringe of society. There are definite parallels to the United States here. There is a beautiful spirit in the Soviet people, something for which few Americans have any feeling. There is a sense of joy and a love for life in the happier moments, and a deep compassion in sorrow. I was pleasantly surprised by this glimpse into a world I know only through second-hand descriptions. Congratulations to the New York Theatre for their Soviet Film Festival.

Eastern treasure buried in her thighs
soul of the ancients in her eyes
Lovers wander to this place
possessed by impulse, blessed by grace
This hill of broken armies
who are the warriors who come before me?
Will I become what is in this tomb?
a naked man in an empty room...

In the Persian strings I dream
in the slow night taxim
In the palace echoes ring out
in the slow night taxim
Flesh is wet inside blue steam
where no borders chain my dream
In the palace echoes ring out
in the slow night taxim

In the Red City
this is the way they pray:
the red walls dry with dead slaves' bones
the women sell greens in the marketplace
the sweetness of figs lives in their smile
they speak of fields and the ones who are gone
I follow dogs to a mountain cave
chant with beggars in the blinding dust
of evening's song...

In the Persian strings I dream
in the slow night taxim
In the palace echoes ring out
in the slow night taxim
Flesh is wet inside blue steam
where no borders chain my dream
In the palace echoes ring out
in the slow night taxim...

—a song by Claude Palmer

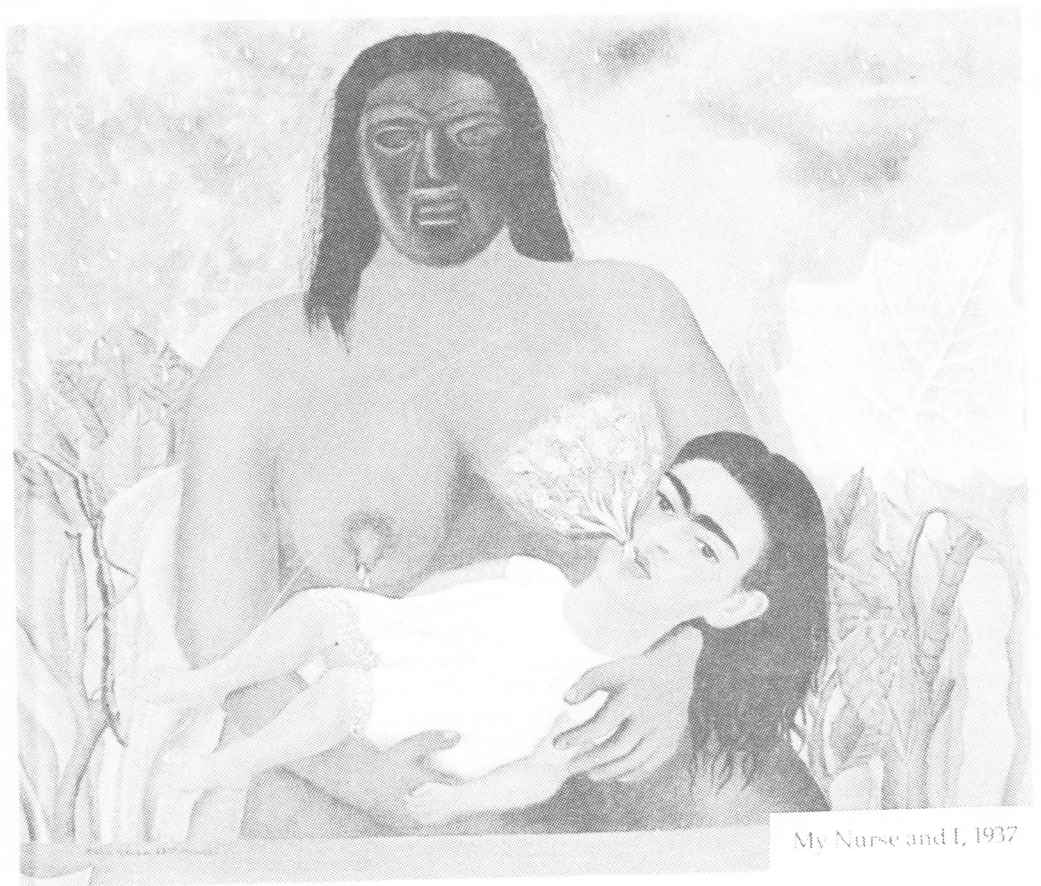
"We want the world, and we want it
now" -- Doors
"We are the world" -- '80s Stars

Slow Night Taxim





The Two Fridas, 1939



My Nurse and I, 1937

FRIDA KAHLO PART II:

Why The Hell Did She paint Herself Over and Over And Over Again?

by Margot Pepper

It is highly unlikely that anyone who is even remotely familiar with Frida Kahlo's paintings should not know her face, for all celebrated reproductions of her work without exception are self-portraits. Unfortunately, this fact is too often misinterpreted as testimony to Kahlo's narcissism—a condition which perhaps more accurately characterizes the society responsible for this gross misunderstanding.

As I elaborated upon in the first half of this two-part exposé, this misunderstanding may be attributed in part to a rather insidiously subtle censorship process which gives the impression that Kahlo painted nothing but her own handsome face, varying only the costume which framed it like the interchangeable wardrobe of a paper doll. This censorship has a great deal to do with the often disturbing subject matter of the majority of Kahlo's paintings, many of which have been dismissed as being too pornographic, too violent, or too intimately female for our society to accept as commercial commodities.

The subject matter of these controversial and consequently less-known paintings derive their themes from Frida's unusual life. As a teenage victim of a gruesome bus accident, which among other complications shattered her spine, Frida endured an unimaginable amount of physical pain throughout her life, both physical and emotional. She was forced to wear plaster and steel corsets, endure dozens of operations, and spent a good deal of her life in bed where she maintained her sanity by painting and by receiving a constant flow of visitors. While recovering from the accident she wrote to a school sweetheart the following words, the essence of which would permeate most of her work:

—...A little while ago...I was a child who went about in a world of colors... Everything was mysterious and something was hidden, guessing what it was was a game for me. If you knew how terrible it is to know suddenly, as if a bolt of lightening elucidated the earth. Now I live in a painful planet, transparent as ice...I know nothing lies behind, if there were something I would see it.—

Throughout her remaining 29 years of life, Frida would seek a means out of this "painful planet—" or at least a means by which she might recreate and transform it into something more satisfying. The state I feel she sought is epitomized in her painting "The Love Embrace of the Universe, the Earth (México), Diego, Me and Señor Xolotl." It was painted in 1949, five years before her death.

This is by far my favorite Kahlo, if not one of the most beautiful paintings I have ever seen. It is of a series of cosmological love embraces, nested one inside the other. Towards the very center Diego Rivera, (the famous

Mexican muralist), lies naked in Frida's lap like an enormous fleshy infant. In the middle of his forehead is embedded a tremendous third eye or *ojo avisor* (informing eye,) as Frida called it. "Between those eyes," she wrote, "so distant one from the other, one devines the invisible eye of Oriental wisdom."

Frida, in turn, clad in native costume, is embraced by the mother-goddess Earth-México, who appears as an uprooted mountain with trees and cacti, her live roots dangling. She in turn is embraced by the half-day time, half-night time sky. Two planet-like spheres float within the body of the universe and his hands are clasped, one dark, one white, around the base of the Earth-mountain.

This painting, as Hayden Herrera has stated in her wonderful biography, clearly "expresses Frida's belief in the interrelatedness of all things in the universe, but also forms the matrix that joins and sustains herself and her spouse," Diego Rivera. It is a painting of balance and intimates a state of near-ecstasy and well-being, for it could be said that everything merges with everything else in the scene, including Frida and Diego, the earth, and the universe itself, which of course not only encompasses all these things, but in fact *is* these things; there are no clearly defined boundary distinctions.

*That which compels many
artists to create: that the
soul might be exposed...*

Against this background of "oneness," which seems to fade in and out of our awareness throughout most of our lives—as if the realization that we are undeniably an integral part of nature is exclusively reserved for some sort of ephemeral or "enlightened" state of being—all is not well. Both Frida and the earth are gashed across their respective chests suggestive of Frida's knowledge of the alternative life-death, pain-joy, destruction-rebirth cycles of nature. Further, Frida's hold on Diego is not enough to sustain him, for he is also supported by the arm of the earth as if to say that Frida was aware of the inevitability of at best having to share Diego with the rest of the world, hence the wound in Frida's chest.

This wound, which is the recurrent theme in the majority of Frida's paintings, is not only a result of the pain she suffered as a consequence of her accident, but of her relationship to Diego as well. Diego was hardly the enlightened "god," nor the child Frida depicted him as in "The Love Embrace of the Uni-



"The Love Embrace of the Universe" by Frida Kahlo verse—" which was more a sublimation of Frida's unfulfilled desires than it was a reality: Frida was incapable of bearing the child she so desperately wanted, and Diego was incapable of playing the role of the "godlike lover-husband" in which Frida hoped to cast him.

Frida sought a union of ethereal love with a man who had quite a different interpretation of his marriage vows. Although she finally accepted his steady stream of affairs as part of the package, both her paintings and her friends suggest that she never managed to digest this fact emotionally and her relationship to Rivera only served to aggravate her emotional pain and sense of isolation.

It should come as no surprise, then, that occasionally Frida turned to female lovers for the love she felt that even Diego, "diviner of Oriental wisdom," was incapable of giving her. Perhaps she believed only another woman would be capable of sharing her pain and the overlapping fragments of an unspoken language; a language expressive of what might be an ineffable experience unique to females, and which she could not seem to share with Diego. But of course, her female lovers were not enough either; nothing ever is when what is sought so intensely is externalized. Thus Frida painted....

Frida painted the only thing any honest artist can paint: a truthful vision of the world as she perceived it. As she was bed-ridden a great deal, naturally the realization that she lived not only within the external drama of history, but within the private world of her emotions became all the more acute, and to a certain degree, was her truest "reality." The recurrent themes of isolation and pain in Frida's paintings, then take on

respectively dual aspects: besides reflecting the physical reality of an invalid, they speak of the spiritual isolation of the artist dwelling within the confines of her mind and of the pain of disillusionment, of unfulfilled spiritual longing.

What I see motivating Frida's paintings is that which compels many artists to create: that the soul might be exposed, drawn out of the artist's body and given shape and form and placed in the world for all to see and understand.

The hope underlying the act of creation is that a bridge might be created between the internal world of the artist and the external world. Yet to a certain degree all attempts at bringing others into this world are inevitably miscarried—at least via the means afforded by the scientific world of divisions and proofs. Can there really be such a bridge?—or any legitimate art critics for that matter?—for they can no more perceive what the artist has truly created, where it has failed and succeeded, than could they see the artist's soul or accompany her into her dreams at night.

The pain so prevalent in Frida's paintings, as I understand it, is the longing to be related to something else, and perhaps a realization that there exists a parallel world in which one must stand completely alone. Here, no matter how urgently the soul reaches out with paints, words, notes, bricks, and so on, the individual is destined to the confines of her silent, ecstatic, terrible, and joyous universe.

One means out of this world might be to seek solace from oneself, to befriend oneself, share all with oneself before proceeding outward. Thus Frida painted "The Two Fridas," a painting often misinterpreted as the most blatant confirmation of her own narcissism. It is a portrait of two Fridas holding hands. The Frida on the left wears an old-fashioned white dress with lace frills. Like the bed sheets of the story-book virgin, the dress is soiled with the blood dripping from her exposed heart, probably torn open by love. She is the weaker of the two and the more feminine: "The Frida Diego loved," Frida once said.

The other Frida is dressed in traditional Mexican clothes and appears to be much stronger in the conventional sense. Her skin is darker, her brows thicker and her slight mustache has been accentuated to emphasize her masculinity. This Frida's heart is intact, the right ventricle pumping blood into the weaker Frida's heart. Joined by their respective ventricles and hands, together the two Fridas complete the circulation of a single life, the integration of masculine and feminine, body and mind, and reminiscent of the union theme in "The Love Embrace of the Universe—" merge to become one entity.

"The Two Fridas" alone can clarify why Frida is the subject in so many of her portraits. Only the eyes of her self-portraits, and in her reflection in the mirror as she painted, spoke the language no else could understand. Those eyes were one of her truest refuges for they were her own: they alone knew what no one else could know, they saw what no one else could see, they felt what no one else could feel; they alone walked the gardens and prisons

else could feel; they alone walked the gardens and prisons through which her mind ran.

Yet this egocentric "isolationist's" view of the world is not only incomplete, it can be dangerous on a larger social level, and Frida, I think, knew this. It is admirable and necessary to know oneself and to derive strength from within oneself, but it is folly to do so at the expense of artificially separating oneself from what is so erroneously expressed as "the rest of the world." There is no "rest of the world." As Frida implied in the "Love Embrace of the Universe," everything in the world is inextricably bound up with everything in the world, for ever, like it or not, that's how it is. To deny this is as dangerous as believing that some heinous injustice occurring elsewhere on the globe is not going to affect the balance of the entire world. In short, isolation from other individuals, events, ideas, history and the cycles of nature is impossible. Yet this realization is also a source of strength—a source Frida acknowledged and drew from in all of her paintings.

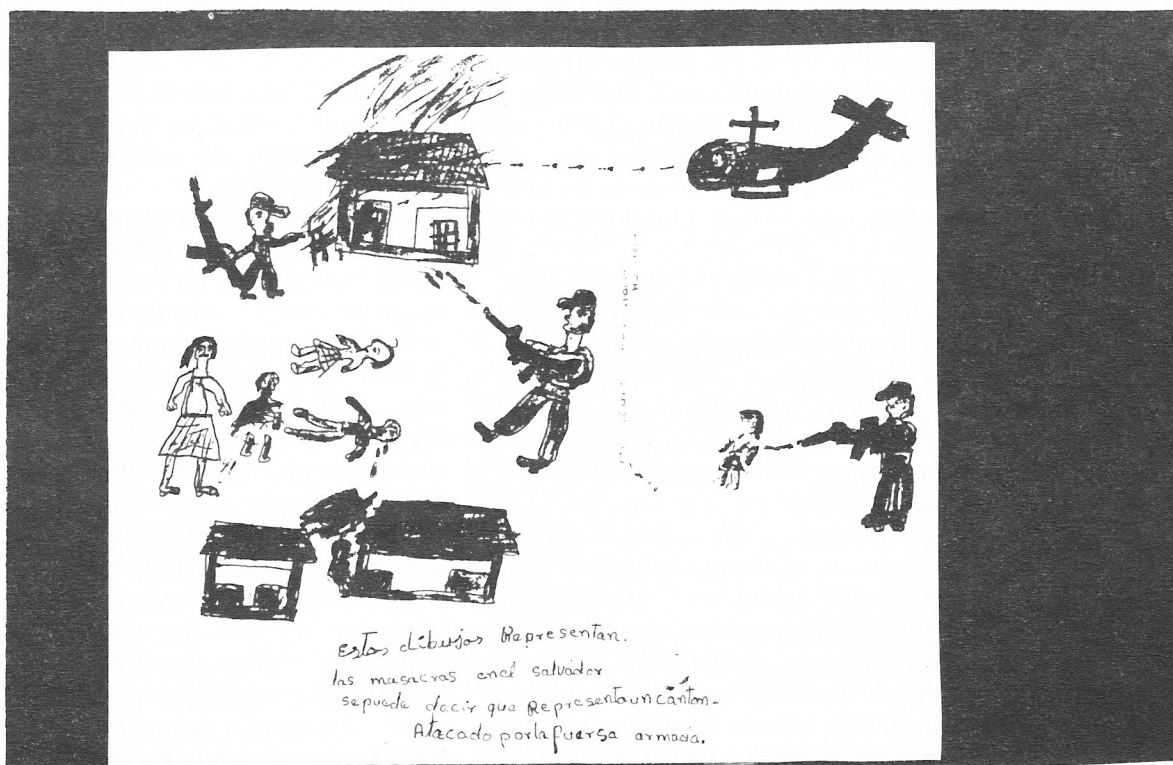
One of the clearest examples of this theme is "My Nurse and I," a painting I shall always remember as the first original Kahlo which immersed me in that place where both our worlds seemed to overlap. Frida has depicted herself as an infant with an adult's head suckling the enlarged brown breasts of her Indian nurse, which secrete the same white liquid as falls from the soft sky. The nurse's face is a fearsome Teotihuacan funerary mask intimating the magical and ritualistic aspects of pre-Columbian culture, its idea of cyclical time and the cooperation of cosmic and biological forces. Its presence in the painting reasserts Mexico's ancient heritage.

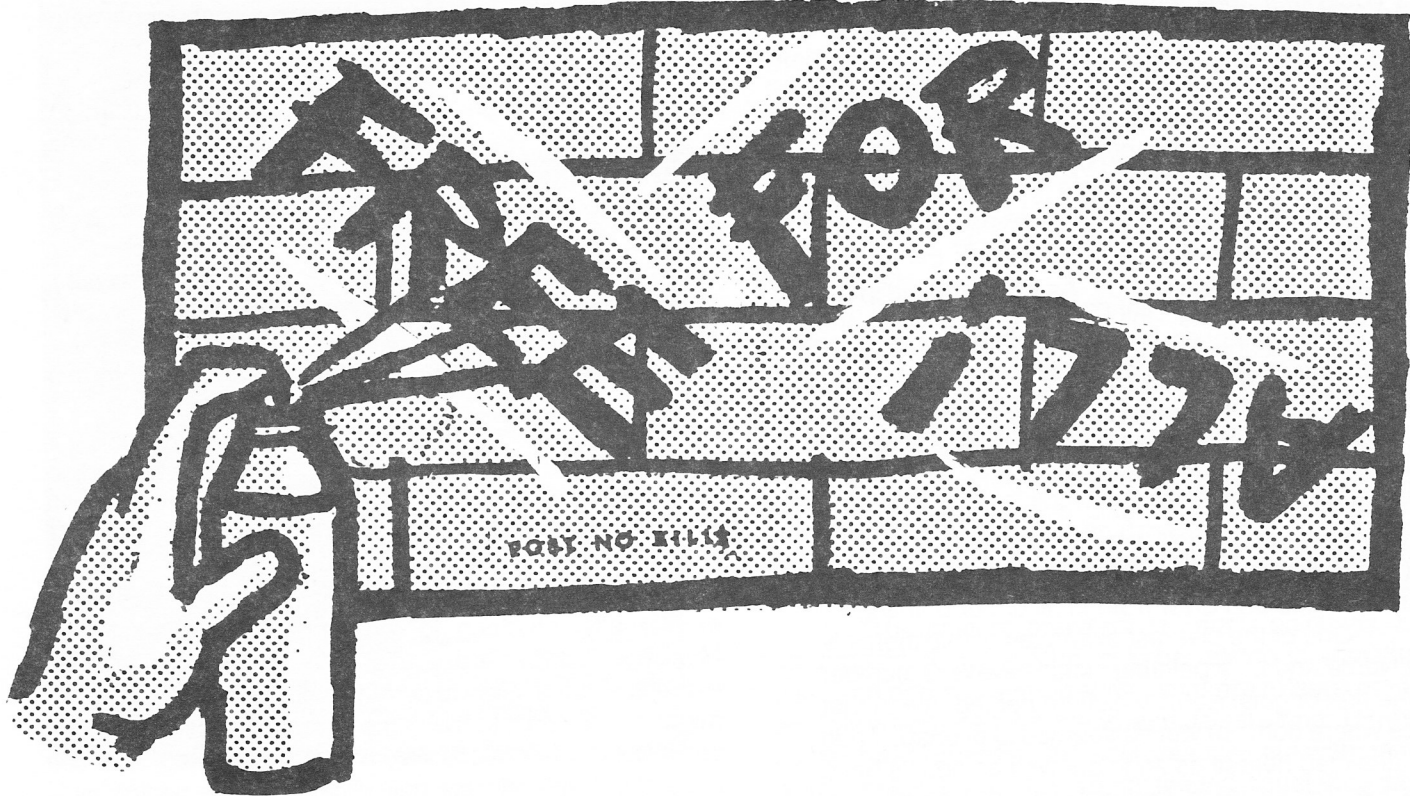
The scene is set in the wild but lush womb of nature, embodied in the nurse's earthy body, which at

once seems to stir Frida closer to the tragic knowledge of her own fate, as suggested in the complacent and melancholy cast of Frida's adult face, while nurturing her with the rich "milk of life."

Frida did not merely paint herself over and over and over again. Her repertoire included many renditions of her Mexican heritage, ranging from moving self-portraits of indigenous individuals to chilling homages to the dead. In so far as her bourgeois upbringing and subsequent lifestyle allowed, in both her art and her daily life, Frida always remained faithful to the spirit of the Mexican Revolution which spawned her. When others were still flaunting the latest Western fashions, as was encouraged under the former dictator, Porfirio Diaz, Frida donned only traditional costumes as a symbol of her cultural pride. Her paintings reflect the mythologies, values and themes of her Indian heritage; the bittersweet themes of life and death, of growth and decay, of nature and its cycles and our inseparable role within it.

It is interesting to note that many of Frida's less emotionally challenging paintings—her still-lives of Mexico's strange and exotic fruits and vegetables, for example—have failed to surface in the public eye, as they might be heaped into the same category as her attractive self-portraits, which are very much in demand. That our access to her work has been limited to her benign self-portraits tells us something about our fixation with the superficial. It tells us something as well about how we still view women, regardless of what advances "the experts" claim women have made since the sixties. Much like the infatuation the media has with the physical make up of the desirable generic woman, we have opted for Frida's face and Tehuana costumes over the expressions of her emotion and experience. I might add, this selection process also tells us that we would rather ignore reminders of human suffering and death whenever possible, that's all.





THE CULTURE CRASH OF 1988

by the Uhuru Maggot

Here's a little pleasure reading to get you through your first annual "greenhouse summer." 1988 will be remembered as a year of many changes. Relatively permanent changes, if we're lucky. Government corruption, media constipation, the decentralization of television and movies have made it tougher to orchestrate 400-year old lies, and this installment of junior fascism is at an adolescent crossroads. 1988 also appears to be the year that Black America finally returns to the forefront of the Resistance.

It's been twenty years since the Vietnam War, Black Power movement, psychedelic movement, and "generation gap" left the nation's identity in a shambles. It was a time when "free love" and racial equality were the themes of the counter-culture. Nevertheless, it was the threat of violence and the constant presence of Blacks that led the mainstream of America to sympathize and tolerate issues such as Affirmative Action and Civil Rights.

Unfortunately, Reaganism has fed white people eight years of isolation and insulation from People of Color, (which is why he was elected, by the way.) Mistrust and suspicion and age-old stereotypes have thrived in the eighties because Black people were not visible as a counterpoint. Even the political activity of the left routinely dehydrated itself with boring, banal, lily-white rituals of sixties nostalgia minus the Negroes. (What, Holly Near

again?) This is because institutional racism at its best deprives whites of any paradigm for community other than obsolete Euro-spastic models. It is no surprise that the white left has been directionless throughout the decade, and it is no coincidence, therefore, that the oozing pus of America's innate racism is now being attacked by the ointment of a resurgent Black America on every cultural front. And we can only expect this clash to sting like alcohol on an open wound.

Whether some whites voted for Jesse Jackson is beside the point. The question is whether or not the rest can digest the medicine he delivers. In other words, to what extent will people continue to cling to the past?

To borrow a phrase, let's call a spade a spade. Raining down a river of corruption wider and deeper than anything Richard Nixon's regime could produce, the United States government has managed to trash its credibility even among the right. With the collapse of American farms, American oil, the Contras and even the Cold war, there is nothing left for the right wing to be riteous about. As the veneer of democracy begins to fade, the media can no longer conceal the contradictions. Despite Ronald Reagan's presence as the last Anglo Saxon icon, the entire system's infrastructure for propagating images of America is in jeopardy.

For what they're worth, the institutions that produce American culture have begun to crumble and self-

destruct at a drastic rate in 1988.

The television writer's strike has all but crippled the national networks, and has already helped the growth of cable and local TV. The movie industry is coping with the rise in video sales, and is willing to try anything at this point to deliver a popular film, even distributing a Black-produced all-Black movie.

Traditionally, American sports have always provided a pompous celebration of the status quo. Yet the National Football League barely survived another strike-torn season, and Baseball and Basketball are threatened by the same problems of player's rights, money, and racism in management.

The music industry has managed to merchandise a steadily decaying product by duping the public with perpetual charades of hype. Meanwhile the quality of popular music has been artificially repressed by the technological "advance" of music-programming computers. The result has been a growing club scene, and an ever growing population of people that can no longer believe in radio.

Stanford this year revised its core curriculum for its American Institutions class, and received national criticism for doing so. The academics were

Reaganism has fed white people 8 years of insulation....

basically saying that ancient white male thinkers aren't so important anymore. This, combined with the slow strangulation of primary education by conservative governments, shows that these people are petrified of teaching the truth to the youth of America.

All of this leads to a "malaise" that makes the Carter era look like a disco in "Saturday Night Fever," but this time the mix is different. Reagan cleaned the slate, but the nation is ready for a new rap.

In the past, segregation was designed to keep Blacks away. Then discrimination was designed to keep opportunities away from Blacks. The oppression of the eighties has been specifically designed to inhibit Black leadership in major institutions. Yet Jesse Jackson has singlehandedly returned American politics to a semblance of functionality. The number one moneymakers in TV and movies are (better than nothing) Bill Cosby and Eddie Murphy, respectively. Doug Williams revived the concept of leadership, carrying his

team to victory as the first Black quarterback in the Super Bowl. The Lakers established "in your face" basketball as the game of the 80's, despite the media's endless efforts to letimize "ugly ball" and "Celtic pride." And while schools are in upheavals over "ethnic studies" in course curricula, the real education is happening from beat boxes on every corner.

Rap music and the Hip-Hop beat have invaded every aspect of music production, but few will admit it. Instruments are obsolete, but a new style prevails. The process of denial operating here is explained by Harry Allen:

"It is to be found in the ghettoization of Hip-Hop, the only really new music form of the last 30 years, and its contextual relegation to the position of coon sideshow, with no real deference to the true progenitors of new American music...This lack of deference forms an age-old, self-conscious attempt to deny the fact that the most progressive movements in American culture, both musically and socially, have always been led by Black people; by B-Boys."

A generation ago, Afro-American visionaries from Martin Luther King to Sly Stone were heralded as navigators of a new age. This is the burden of history that vanguards like Jesse Jackson and RUN-DMC carry with them.

I believe that social change begins by giving credit where credit is due, and those who forget their history are condemned to repeat it. The right is content to continue the polarization of people, and leave the pundits to ask; "Is America ready for a Black...etc." Its time to let go of the chains of the past. Common ground cannot be underestimated, or we will all be participating in the Race Wars of 1991. The measure of racism that this country displays will determine its potential for survival for another generation. Stay tuned to this space, because the revolution will not be televised.

"Stand by me"

-- Ben E. King

"Don't stand so close to me"

-- The Police

THE UGLY DOG

by Stacey Richter

"I wanna be your dog" -- Iggy Pop
"I wanna be your man" -- Stones
"I wanna be sedated" -- Ramones

My name is Serena Star Rosenthal, and these are my memoirs. I will begin with my genealogy. My mother's name is Elizabeth Rose Rosenthal, but she likes to be called Blue Rose, God knows why. I think it sounds like a toilet cleaning liquid. She lived in a big Victorian house near Haight and Ashbury before I was born. She says it was an experimental living situation. No one had any bread, but they had a shitload of weed and L-O-V-E and golly, only four drinking glasses for twenty people. One of the glasses was used for smoking hash though. Everyone shared the mattresses on the floor and the couch in the backyard, but no one was into heavy commitments. So now she doesn't really know who my father was, although I can assume he was Caucasian and male. Mom didn't have a lot of cares back then. She got stoned a lot.

I think pot is lame. Me and my friends do crystal meth which gets you motivated. If I had to choose, I would rather be a rock star than Justine Bateman or any other beautiful woman or fashion model. Also, I would rather be a terrorist than the governor of the state of California, because I know nothing I do will make a difference against the corporations that own all the bombs and most of the money in the world. Unlike my mother who thought a revolution would start if she grew her hair long enough.

This is a poem my mother wrote:

On a late afternoon, we walked through the park
Hand in hand, as the sky grew dark
The kaleidoscope trees whirled in the wind
In the distance, we heard sweet strains of music begin
A pastiche of leaves and colors and sound
Fell from the sky and brushed the ground
You looked in my eyes and knowingly smiled...
We sat on a bench and kissed for a while.

She wrote it in her hippie days. I found it in a shoe box full of day-glo magic markers. It is really embarrassing to even look at it, but it has made me realize that I am more intelligent than my mother is. She has me locked in my room now and won't let me stay out past midnight, even though she has no right to make me do anything because she cannot understand the complexities of my life and thoughts. I have written my own poem that is much more passionate and real.

HELL HOUND

The ugly dog crosses my path
I am not afraid of the glistening fangs
the jaundiced eyes
the foaming gums
spewing corrosive battery acid
I am not afraid of the evil in this world;
the bribed politicians,
the pregnant nuns
the hit-and-run school buses
I shall look that evil pup
in the eye
and command him
"GO HOME!"
Then evil no more
in my neighborhood
shall roam.

-Serena Star Rosenthal, 1988
12:48 a.m., San Francisco,
California.



KOMOTION INTERNATIONAL

Komotion is a cooperative, an alternative, an experiment . . . run by all-volunteer labor. We try to create an environment that inspires and informs. Besides being the home of some 40 musicians, who rehearse and record here, we have evening events that are adventurous and bring forward special talent. We have presented music of all kinds as well as poetry, performance art, films, video, dance, an art gallery, and hosted many benefits. A core of writers works on our often controversial magazine, which provides a forum for a debate around cultural and political issues. Komotion will also be putting out a record in October 1988, featuring music and spoken word performances.

MEMBERSHIP

Komotion has a current membership of about 400 locally and another 100 or so internationally. At this point, our events are not "membership only," but becoming a member is an expression of support for a center of this kind. And on our tenuous budget, WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT to continue. Becoming a member means contributing money or something needed for the Klub's operation.

\$5 Membership

Includes a subscription to the Komotion magazine and schedules of monthly events that are mailed to you. Your Komotion card gets you a discount to all shows.
This is good for one year.

\$50 Membership

Includes the above, plus free admission to all events for you and a guest for a year. Primarily, it is for people who want to (and are able to) more fully support our efforts.
This makes you a "sustaining" member.

\$10 Magazine Subscription

Outside the U.S. Please mail \$ in U.S. funds or international money order.

HOW WE OPERATE

Komotion doesn't pay the performers, except to cover their expenses. The door charge, drinks, etc., are so low that we can only cover the rent and basic expenses from the parties. Even without pay, however, many new acts and established artists have chosen to perform here.

The actual scheduling of events, editing of the magazine, etc., is done by committee in a kind of anarchistic fashion. We find things to be livelier with as few rules and policies as possible.

Write to us at:

KOMOTION INTERNATIONAL
P.O. BOX 410502
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94141-0502



Ridiculous Introductory Price \$1.50

ERRATUM

M. Pepper, "The Children Who Said They'd Never Forget"

Page 12, last paragraph and subsequent passages should read as follows:

"...We looked around at each other and each of us was thinking, "They are wrong. We are new faces upon the earth and we don't want to be like that. We know better."

So it was decided. No matter what it took we would never be like that. It just wasn't in us, plain and simple. We would set the world straight the way it was supposed to be in the first place and why it hadn't been done before we couldn't understand. We must have been the geniuses they so often lauded, only we would have to grow up first before they would recognize this. But the real truth was that we weren't really geniuses at all. It was easy and quite logical the way our brains functioned. It was just that somehow theirs did not.

Then one day we found in ourselves a new creature that looked a lot more like *them*. This was at once both horrible and wonderful. It was horrible because it looked as if we might actually become the thing we had promised ourselves we would never become, but wonderful because *they* began to accept us a bit more. This was very important to us because it looked as if they might at last begin to listen to everything we had waited so long to tell them for their benefit. The only problem was that we had to go to such great lengths to win their acceptance that by the time we secured their attention it became difficult to remember what we wanted to tell them in the first place.

Some of us never remembered. Funny thing is that they kept on trying to get heard anyway. I don't know why. Go ask one of them. There's plenty of them still around doing the same thing.

So that was how we lost a lot of us. That was how things began to go wrong as things often do when you split apart and get lost from your original plan. Divide and you get conquered, or however the saying goes.

Things were no better for those of us who remembered. In fact, they were often worse because the more you remembered, the less *they* listened. So we waited. Some of us in silence, others taking to doodling or whistling little made up songs, and others to bottles and bricks. We waited, all of us alone.

There was only one fragile, web-thin, almost imperceptible thread which bound us all together like an explosion of colorful balloons that might otherwise be lost to the wind. It wove through each of our separate worlds, through the legends of those we believed had succeeded before us, back to the beginning of collective memory and before that even: it was the call. The song of return which would lead us back to this place, the place of which I have been speaking; the song *they* so often mislabeled the call of rebellion.

We would feel the call like the falling of the cool night at four o'clock and the rustling of the grass and the laughter of our friends outside waiting for us."

The correct text resumes on page 12, last paragraph, with the following line:

"It would come at no time in particular but always at the appointed time..."